

Date of Hearing: June 16, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Robert Rivas, Chair

SB 453 (Hurtado) – As Amended May 20, 2021

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Agriculture: Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease Fund.

SUMMARY: This bill creates the Biosecurity and Emerging Infectious Disease (BEID) Fund and continuously appropriates monies from the General Fund (GF) to the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for purposes of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases relating to agriculture. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the BEID Fund within the State Treasury.
- 2) States GFs be continuously appropriated to CDFA for allocation to the California State University (CSU Foundation) for distribution to the Jordan Agricultural Research Center at CSU Fresno.
- 3) Requires these funds to establish the BEID Fund for the purpose of supporting research on biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases relating to agriculture and mitigating the effects of emerging infectious diseases on meat, poultry, and other agricultural production.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Appropriates monies to the CDFA for emergency detection, investigation, or eradication of agricultural plants or animal pests or diseases and, at the discretion of the Secretary of CDFA, authorizes those moneys to be used for planning and research involving detection, investigation, eradication, and methods of quarantine compliance for agricultural plants or animal pests or diseases.
- 2) Requires CDFA to establish and administer a research program to control vertebrate pests that pose a significant threat to the welfare of the state's agricultural economy, infrastructure, and the public.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: Zoonosis is an infectious disease caused by a pathogen, such as a bacterium, virus, parasite or prion, which has jumped from an animal to a human. Typically, the first infected human transmits the infectious agent to at least one other human, who, in turn, infects others. Major modern diseases such as Ebola virus disease and salmonellosis are zoonoses. Most strains of influenza that infect humans are human diseases, although many strains of bird flu and swine flu are zoonoses; these viruses occasionally recombine with human strains of the flu and can cause pandemics such as the 1918 Spanish flu or the 2009 swine flu. According to a report from the United Nations Environment Programme and International Livestock Research Institute, the causes are mostly environmental.

CAHFS is considered the backbone of California's warning system that helps to protect the health of California's livestock and poultry. CAHFS safeguards the public health with rapid and reliable diagnoses for animal diseases including those affecting humans. CAHFS operates in partnership with CDFA, UC Davis, veterinarians, and livestock and poultry producers. CAHFS provides quality services that protect animal health and performance, public health, and the food supply.

The Jordan Agricultural Research Center is housed at CSU Fresno. Scientists conduct research on agricultural practices, and post-harvest processing. Food and beverage products tested including wine, fresh fruit, and dessert products in development by students for commercial purposes and targeted consumer products developed by faculty.

According to the author, The COVID-19 pandemic has shuttered businesses and schools, devastated families, and caught governments around the world unprepared. As of February 2021, it has infected over 110 million people worldwide and killed approximately 2.44 million. Many scientists are quite confident that it came to humans through an animal. This was not the first dangerous disease that has passed from animals to humans and it will not be the last. The CDC estimates that 3 out of 4 emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals. Currently, there are 1.6 million undiscovered viruses circulating in the animal population, at least half of which have the potential to spread to humans. "In the past, once we have conquered regional epidemics or smaller scale pandemics, collectively, we have simply moved on, we have let our focus lapse. We cannot do that this time."

Supporters state the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the link between infectious diseases and climate change. Human encroachment into biodiverse areas and population shifts due to climate displacement will increase the risk of dangerous zoonotic diseases—those that jump between animals and people—like COVID-19. This bill adds additional research to better prevent, prepare for, and respond to zoonotic disease outbreaks like COVID-19 and other challenges arising from increasing climate change.

This bill designates an individual program within the 23-campus CSU system as recipient of ongoing state funds for biosecurity and emerging infectious disease research. In addition to Fresno, there are three CSU campuses (Pomona, Chico, and San Luis Obispo) with strong agricultural programs that can do that work. According to the author, the bill calls for special consideration of Fresno's research center which is uniquely situated to investigate biosecurity and emerging infections disease with agriculture, engineering, science, and mathematics experts working together at this location. The committee may wish to consider whether broadening the bill is appropriate to provide other CSU campuses an opportunity to bid on this research initiative.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Biotechnology Innovation Organization

Opposition

None on file.

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