

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2020

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman
Financial Services and General
Government Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman
Financial Services and General
Government Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member
Financial Services and General
Government Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steve Womack
Ranking Member
Financial Services and General
Government Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Kennedy and Quigley and Ranking Members Coons and Womack:

Thank you for your work to finalize the (FY) 2021 appropriations legislation. As you seek compromise on key aspects of federal spending, we request that you maintain Section 904 of the House-passed Financial Services and General Government bill to prevent the sale of Plum Island, New York. This language extends the existing funding prohibitions in Section 635 of Public Law No: 116-93 which prevents the federal government from marketing Plum Island for sale to the highest bidder.

We oppose the existing provisions in federal law that require the mandatory sale of Plum Island. For decades, Plum Island housed an animal research laboratory known as the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. Several years ago, Congress authorized the creation of a new replacement facility in Kansas, and required DHS to sell Plum Island in a public sale to offset the cost of the new facility. This requirement blocks the federal government from disposing of this property through normal processes.

It is imperative that the sale requirement be blocked, and eventually repealed, for two reasons. First, the sale will no longer serve the purpose for which it was intended, as the Kansas location has since been funded and no longer requires the revenue from the sale of Plum Island. Second, Plum Island and its natural treasures must remain free from developers so that it can instead be preserved for future generations. In recent months, a coalition of local stakeholders has proposed realistic and feasible plans to realize the Island's research and conservation potential, which remain hampered by existing federal law despite widespread and bipartisan support. By preventing the sale, we can take away the threat of private development, while continuing to work with our colleagues to craft an alternative, long-term path for this precious resource that allows it to remain with the federal government or a responsible entity for the purposes of conservation, education, and research. The House-passed language in Section 904,

under Title IX of Division D of H.R. 7617 achieves this goal, and we ask for your support for retaining this important language in any final appropriations measure

We thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rep. Joe Courtney

/s/

Rep. Lee Zeldin

/s/

Senator Christopher S. Murphy

/s/

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

/s/

Senator Richard Blumenthal