

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 27, 2021

The Honorable Rochelle Walensky
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
4770 Buford Highway, NE
Atlanta, GA, 30341-3717

We write in reference to the CDC's ban on the importation of dogs into the United States from 113 countries, which took effect on July 14, 2021.

The CDC put this ban in place because of heightened concern about the prevalence of rabies among foreign dog populations, which could be reintroduced into the United States through adoption. Canine rabies has been eradicated in the United States since 2007, and we share the CDC's goal of ensuring this remains the case.

The ban's broad scope, however, causes us great concern as it treats 113 countries with a one-size-fits-all approach. This ban will have extensive impact including dogs that accompanied their U.S.-based families as they moved back to the United States, and K9 companions of U.S. service members stationed abroad. All of these people complied with strict U.S. health and vaccination regulations to keep canine rabies out of the country.

Every dog deserves a loving home, and U.S. shelters alone cannot meet every American's desire to adopt a rescue dog. Many Americans choose to adopt pets from overseas, saving them from grim lives in captivity or from painful deaths. By opening their hearts and homes to adopted dogs from other countries, they save a dog's life and gain a loving pet.

The CDC's ban prevents thousands of dogs from 113 countries being rescued and adopted into loving and safe homes. China is one of those countries that we will use as an example. It is a country that fails to enforce laws against the consumption of dog meat and does little to halt particularly inhumane means of killing dogs at annual Yulin "dog meat" festivals. This dog abuse at the festival, which has received a great deal of media attention, is one that has stirred many American humanitarians to work with charities that rescue, vet, vaccinate, and sterilize dogs there. According to your agency, not a single dog originating from the People's Republic of China, and imported into the U.S., has been diagnosed with rabies in the past decade.

We believe that dogs destined for American adoption can be safely imported by requiring confirmation of rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian in the country of origin, followed by rabies serology testing at least 30 days post-vaccination.

We ask you to recognize the need to modernize the government's dog import process in a way that allows reputable U.S. based animal charities to continue their life-saving missions. We believe that the CDC can and should establish a process that allows adoptions to resume. This

process might include a country-by-country risk-based analysis, proof of rabies vaccination, pre-departure rabies serology testing, and development of a secure and fraud-resistant “pet passport”.

We urge the CDC to work with stakeholders to create a solution that protects public health but also allows responsible members of the pet rescue community to continue their work. The U.S. House recently passed an amendment to provide CDC with \$3 million for a more rigorous screening program for dogs about to enter the U.S. That is a far more discerning and sensible approach than a categorical ban of dog imports from more than 100 nations.

We thank you for working with us to ensure rescue organizations are able continue their work to help dogs find loving homes with American families by reevaluating the current ban.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

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Collin Allred
Member of Congress

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Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

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Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

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Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

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Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

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Earl L. “Buddy” Carter
Member of Congress

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Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

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Jim Cooper
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Charlie Crist
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Jason Crow
Member of Congress

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Rodney Davis
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Madeleine Dean
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