Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 5, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to you today to express our concerns about recent reports of wild horses suffering from mysterious respiratory and neurological illnesses in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) facilities. The most recent outbreak began on April 23rd at the Cañon City, Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Facility and has since led to the deaths of at least 127 horses.

Sadly, this is not the first outbreak to occur at a BLM facility this year. In March, an outbreak of Streptococcus equi at the Wheatland, Wyoming corral forced the facility's closure and the postponement of an upcoming auction.

According to a preliminary investigation by BLM, wild horses at the Cañon City facility have experienced difficulties, including nasal discharge, coughing, hypoxia, and other respiratory difficulties. Considering the cramped conditions of holding pens, it should come as no surprise that a deadly disease can spread so quickly. Wild equines are accustomed to roaming freely over 33 million acres, not being held in tight quarters on 50 acres of land.

Earlier this year, the BLM announced plans to roundup at least 22,000 wild horses and burros, nearly doubling its previous goal. This would add to the nearly 60,000 equines currently held in BLM facilities. We believe it would be ill-advised and a waste of taxpayer resources to hold additional federally-protected horses without knowing the impact of current conditions on their health.

For this reason, we urge the BLM to investigate the relationship between facility conditions and recent outbreaks, and consider halting further roundups until the safety of wild horses and burros can be guaranteed, both during the roundups and while they are corralled. We greatly appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress