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Greetings,

On behalf of the Berry Industry Stakeholders, we request the expedited refill of the virology position at HRCU in Corvallis, Oregon given the upcoming retirement of Dr. Robert Martin in January 2020. Our group is concerned that even with a brief disruption in services there will be innumerable consequences involving the export and import of berry propagative material, and critical activities of the Berries clean plant network.

The virologist position at the USDA-ARS Corvallis location is critical not only for berries but also for grapes. The PI occupying this position needs to keep up with current issues, develop 21st century diagnostics protocols for berries in support of clean plant programs in the U.S., and carry out research on the identification and management of viruses of berry crops. Without this support, the industry teeters on the edge of relevancy and competitive advantage.

We request that this position is re-filled by March of 2020. A recent expedited effort to replace the ARS potato breeder in Prosser, WA was successfully completed in three months. I believe immediate action to begin the search for the new scientist would only enhance the possibility for similar success.

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