April 13, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Governor Whitmer:

It is with immense concern for public health that I write to you. While your initial “Stay Home, Stay Safe” Order was put in place to protect the health and safety of all citizens, I believe you have done so at the expense of protecting our population from other health hazards, including Arboviruses – viruses transmitted by mosquitoes. Unfortunately, despite my numerous suggestions for addressing this oversight, an update was not included in E.O. 2020-42.

Just last year your administration urged Michigan residents to cancel, postpone or reschedule outdoor events scheduled at or after dusk, especially those that involve children, to reduce exposure to the mosquito borne virus Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Half of the individuals who died from EEE were from my district.

Patients with EEE are treated with supportive care, which often includes intensive care in a hospital and ventilator assistance. It is well known ventilators are needed to address COVID-19 infections.

There is concern EEE may return this season due to the mild winter and we need to be prepared. Michigan residents are already looking for ways to protect themselves and their families. Prevention of Arboviruses, according to Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) includes using insect repellent and taking steps to control mosquitoes inside and outside your home. Included in MDHHS suggestions for controlling mosquitoes are activities many people rely on lawn care and landscape professionals to do:

- Keep grass cut short and shrubbery trimmed
- Clean clogged roof gutters, particularly if leaves tend to plug up the drains
- Flush ornamental fountains and birdbaths periodically; aerate ornamental pools, or stock them with predatory fish.
Additionally, the Center for Disease Control recommends applying an adulticide, a type of insecticide used to kill adult mosquitoes that spread viruses. Adulticides may be applied by a mosquito control program, a licensed pest control professional, or as a do-it-yourself application. When used according to product label instructions, adulticides do not harm people, pets, or the environment.

Your “Stay Home, Stay Safe” Order completely disregards the very real and imminent threat of Arboviruses. I urge you to revise your order to allow residents to follow MDHHS and CDC guidelines for preventing mosquito bites and Arboviruses. This should include, at minimum, the following:

- Classify lawn care and landscape professionals as essential, aligning with federal guidelines
- Classify insect repellent and adulticides as essential items
- Extend Certified Pesticide Applicator and Registered Technician Licenses from 12/31/19 to 12/31/20
- Expedite license reciprocity applications for pesticide applicators

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at (517) 373-6960 or senklasata@senate.michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Kim LaSata
State Senator
21st District