

March XX, 2019

Senate Budget Committee Chair Mike Enzi
Senate Budget Committee Ranking Member Bernard Sanders
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

House Budget Committee Chair John Yarmuth
House Budget Committee Ranking Member Steve Womack
U.S. House of Representatives
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Richard Shelby
Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

House Appropriations Committee Chair Nita Lowey
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Kay
Granger
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations strongly urge you to reject calls for additional cuts to policies within the jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry or the House Committee on Agriculture.

In December, Congress passed a bipartisan farm bill that was budget neutral, building on the 2014 Farm Bill that made a significant contribution to deficit reduction. The 2014 farm bill was estimated to contribute \$23 billion to deficit reduction over 10 years at the time of passage. In fact, it was the only reauthorization bill in that Congress that voluntarily offered savings.

These difficult cuts in 2014 resulted from hard choices made in partnership with agricultural leaders and were designed to substantially reform the farm safety net, conservation initiatives and nutrition assistance – ultimately reducing the financial support provided to America's farmers and ranchers.

Moreover, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the 2014 Farm Bill has cost far less than projected. According to CBO, nutrition and crop insurance alone will spend nearly \$100 billion less than originally projected due to lower farm-gate prices and continued strength in the overall U.S. economy.

The 2018 farm bill improves upon the reforms made in 2014 and is budget neutral, with the measure projected to spend far less over ten years than even the 2014 farm bill. The bill does so while also improving access to conservation programs, maintaining a commitment to nutrition programs and providing farmers and ranchers with the risk management certainty needed in this uncertain environment.

There's no doubt that farm country and the economies of agricultural-based rural America are hurting. While USDA forecasts that farm income will rise by nearly 10 percent in 2019, that level is still down 44 percent from 2013. In addition, farm debt and debt-to-asset ratios are climbing, bankruptcies are on the rise and retaliatory tariffs weigh on farm prices and erode our competitiveness in key export markets.

With the agriculture and rural economy struggling and as USDA begins implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, we respectfully request that you reject cuts to vital farm policy programs. Further cuts to farm risk management programs would deliver a significant blow to U.S. agriculture at a time when farmers, ranchers, and rural America are already struggling.

Sincerely,