September 30, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Pryor  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, FDA, and  
Related Agencies – Chairman  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, FDA, and  
Related Agencies – Ranking Member  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Pryor, Ranking Member Shelby, and Ranking Member Blunt:

The Animal Agriculture Coalition (AAC) writes to express our support for the Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory (SEPRL) and its continued synergy in poultry research and development. The AAC is comprised of most major animal and animal-related commodity organizations as well as allied organizations representing veterinary medicine, animal science and various livestock or animal agricultural interests in the U.S.

AAC urges the committee to support investments in ARS infrastructure. To sustain USDA’s research lab infrastructure and capacity to address long-term research priorities, a 2012 review of ARS facilities was completed that highlighted facilities with aging infrastructure. The SEPRL in Athens, Georgia was identified as the highest priority facility recommended for modernization. AAC recommends $155 million to construct a new facility that will enable USDA scientists to more adequately address emerging and exotic poultry diseases which threaten not only the Nation’s poultry industry but also the health of Americans. Until that project is completed ARS will be unable to move to other important infrastructure improvements. Support for this facility is included as part of the Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative in the President’s budget request. In the House Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill the Committee included critical funding that we hope you will support when the bill is reconciled with the Senate bill.

SEPRL was established in 1960 and became the center for detecting and treating major poultry diseases. As a result, research at this lab was expanded to support collaboration on poultry health and infectious animal diseases that may impact human health with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of
Health and more than 10 universities around the country. This laboratory serves the nation and is a vital link to a healthy and sustaining US poultry industry.

In short, the work performed at this key ARS facility is critical for the modern food and agriculture industry, and promotes a healthy and safe food supply chain for American and world consumers. Funding for SEPRL demonstrates a commitment to the importance of strong research support for America’s agriculture sector.

Once again, the AAC thanks you for prioritizing funding for agencies and individual programs that are of great importance to animal-related commodity organizations, veterinary medicine, animal science and other animal agriculture stakeholders, as well as to U.S. and world consumers. Thank you for your consideration of our views. Should you have questions, I can be reached at Dwells@TurkeyFed.org and 202.730.9636.

Sincerely,

Damon Wells
Chairman
Animal Agriculture Coalition

On behalf of:

American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners
American Association Swine Veterinarians
American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
American Dairy Goat Association
American Dairy Science Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Goat Federation
American Horse Council
American Society of Animal Science
American Sheep Industry Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Agriculture Alliance
Animal Health Institute
Animal Science Societies
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Fats and Proteins Research Foundation
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals (MDA) Multistate Initiative
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Chicken Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Renderers Association
National Turkey Federation
Poultry Science Association
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
United Egg Producers