February 21, 2017

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

House Budget Committee Interim Chair Diane Black
House Budget Committee Ranking Member John Yarmuth
U.S. House of Representatives
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Thad Cochran
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

House Appropriations Committee Chair Rodney Frelinghuysen
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations, representing America’s agriculture, nutrition, conservation, rural development, finance, forestry, energy, trade, local government, plant/animal health, agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, labor, outdoor recreation, equipment manufacturing, cooperatives, hunters, anglers and crop insurance sectors, 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.

Almost three years ago, Congress passed a bipartisan farm bill that made a significant contribution to deficit reduction. This bipartisan legislation was estimated to contribute $23 billion to deficit reduction over 10 years at the time of passage. This was the first time a farm bill voluntarily reduced spending before Congress began considering the bill. It was the only reauthorization bill in that Congress that voluntarily offered savings. These difficult cuts resulted from hard choices made to reform and reduce the farm safety net, conservation initiatives, and nutrition assistance.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office’s (CBO) January 2017 baseline 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, while mandatory federal spending outside the Agriculture Committees’ jurisdiction has risen over the same time period.
We have all begun preparing for the 2018 Farm Bill and recognize that passing a bill with additional funding reductions would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, as the Senate and House Agriculture Committees begin preparing for the 2018 Farm Bill, it is imperative that the committees not be hamstrung by further budget or appropriations cuts to any farm bill program. Instead, we strongly encourage you to recognize the substantial savings already achieved, which far exceed expectations, and to provide the committees the opportunity to complete their work through regular order, without arbitrary budget cuts or caps. With the agriculture and rural economy struggling, households across the country struggling to meet their basic needs for nutrition, and farm income down 46 percent from only three years ago, it would be perilous to hinder development and passage of the 2018 Farm Bill with further cuts.

During consideration of the 2014 Farm Bill, the Agriculture Committees made the difficult choices necessary to deliver a bipartisan bill. Budget cuts made in that bill should be recognized as Agriculture’s contribution to deficit reduction. We know the committees will once again face challenging budgetary and policy choices in the development of the 2018 Farm Bill. That is why it is so important you ensure the committee process for the farm bill can proceed with some budget flexibility.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Ag Processing Inc
AgChoice Farm Credit
AgCountry Farm Credit Services
AgCredit
AgFirst Farm Credit Bank
AgGeorgia Farm Credit, ACA
AgriBank, FCB
Agriculture Energy Coalition
AgStar Financial Services, ACA
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Food Bank Association
Alabama Peanut Producers Association
Alabama Soybean & Corn Association
Alaska Food Coalition
Aldo Leopold Foundation, Inc.
Algae Biomass Organization

Alliance to End Hunger
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Agri-Women
American Agriculture Movement Inc.
American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Crop Insurers
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases
American Bankers Association
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Crystal Sugar Company
American Dairy Science Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farm Bureau Insurance Services, Inc.
American Farmland Trust
American Feed Industry Association
American Fisheries Society
American Forest & Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Forests
American Heart Association
American Insurance Association
American Malting Barley Association
American Mushroom Institute
American Rivers
American Seed Trade Association
American Sesame Growers Association
American Sheep Industry
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
American Sugar Cane League
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
American Water Works Association
American Wood Council
AmericanHort
Appalachian Mountain Club
Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Archery Trade Association
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Arizona Pork Council
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Forestry Association
Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance
Arkansas Soybean Association
Arkansas Wildlife Federation
Aspen American Insurance Company
Associated Milk Producers Inc.
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Arizona Food Banks
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Association of Kansas Food Banks
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Audubon Arizona
Audubon Arkansas
Audubon California
Audubon Center at Riverlands
Audubon Connecticut
Audubon Dakota
Audubon Florida
Audubon Great Lakes
Audubon Minnesota
Audubon Mississippi
Audubon Nebraska
Audubon New York
Audubon North Carolina
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Pennsylvania
Audubon Rockies
Audubon South Carolina
Audubon Texas
Audubon Vermont
Audubon Washington
Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm
Aurora Cooperative
B.A.S.S. LLC
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
FoodCorps
Food Pantry
Forest Stewards Guild
Forestry Association of South Carolina
Freestore Foodbank
Frontier Farm Credit
Garden Valley Neighborhood House
Generations United
Georgia Farm Bureau
Georgia Food Bank Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
Grange Insurance Audubon Center
Greater Cleveland Food Bank
GreenStone Farm Credit Services
Growth Energy
GROWMARK
Hardwood Federation
Headwaters Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America
Hudson Crop Insurance Services
Humboldt State University Dept. of Forestry
Hunger Free Colorado
Hunger Free Vermont
Hunger Solutions Minnesota
Hunger Solutions New York
Hunger Task Force
Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Illinois Council Trout Unlimited
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Illinois Pork Producers Association
Independent Community Bankers of America
Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America
Indiana Farm Bureau
Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association
Indiana Soybean Alliance
Intertribal Timber Council
Iowa Corn Growers Association
Iowa Environmental Council
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
Iowa Soybean Association
Irrigation Association
Islamic Relief USA
Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Kansas Cooperative Council
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association
Kansas Pork Association
Kentucky Association of Food Banks
Kentucky Farm Bureau
Kentucky Soybean Association
Kiddie City Child Care Community
Land Trust Alliance
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College Columbia University
Lee Miles Hunger Center
Louisiana Association of Cooperstives
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Food Bank Association
Louisiana Forestry Association
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Lower Clear Fork SWCD
Lower Mississippi River Foundation
Lutheran Services in America
Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers
Maryland Farm Bureau
Maryland Forests Association, Inc.
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National Association of University Forest Resource Programs
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Barley Improvement Committee
National Black Growers Council
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Christmas Tree Association
National Co+op Grocers
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Conservation District Employees Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Cotton Ginners' Association
National Cottonseed Products Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Council on Aging
National Deer Alliance
National Farm to School Network
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Organic Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Peach Council
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
National Woodland Owners Association
National Young Farmers Coalition
NAU Country Insurance Company
NC Forestry Association
Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board
Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers Association
Nebraska Pork Producers Association
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nebraska Wheat Board
Nebraska Wheat Growers Association
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New England Forestry Foundation
New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition
New Jersey Farm Bureau
New Mexico Appleseed
New Mexico Grain Sorghum Association
New Mexico Association of Food Banks
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
New York Farm Bureau
North Carolina Farm Bureau
North Carolina Pork Council
North Central Weed Science Society
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association -- Interstate Council
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
Northwest Farm Credit Services
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association
Ohio AgriBusiness Association
Ohio Association of Foodbanks
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Ohio River Foundation
Ohio Soybean Association  
Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts  
Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Oklahoma Pork Council  
Oklahoma Sorghum Association  
Oklahoma Soybean Association  
Oregon Cherry Growers, Inc.  
Oregon Farm Bureau  
Oregon Food Bank  
Oregon Small Woodlands Association  
Organic Trade Association  
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel St. Vincent dePaul Society  
PA Association of Conservation Districts  
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association  
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
PennFuture  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
People's Community Church  
Personal Ag Management  
Pheasants Forever  
Pinchot Institute for Conservation  
Pollinator Partnership  
Prairie Rivers Network  
Producers Cooperative Association  
Project Bread  
Public Health Institute  
PYCO Industries, Inc.  
Quail Forever  
Rain and Hail Insurance Society  
Resource Management Service, LLC  
RESULTS  
Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Rural Advancement Foundational International  
Schlitz Audubon Nature Center  
School Nutrition Association  
Second Harvest Food Bank CCL  
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio  
Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley  
Select Milk Producers, Inc.  
Share Our Strength  
Shared Harvest Foodbank  
Shoesole Management Team  
Silveus Insurance Group  
SNF Agriculture  
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior  
Society of American Foresters  
Society of St. Andrew  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Cleveland  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Soil Science Society of America  
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center  
South Carolina Farm Bureau  
South Carolina Peach Council  
South Dakota Farm Bureau  
South Dakota Soybean Association  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation  
South East Dairy Farmers Association  
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association  
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative  
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation  
Southern States Cooperative  
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Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative of Florida
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The American Phytopathological Society
The Community Pantry
The Conservation Fund
The Fertilizer Institute
The Food Depot
The Food Trust
The Foodbank, Inc.
The Hardwood Federation
The Izaak Walton League of America
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Lyme Timber Company
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
The Wetlands Initiative
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
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Trout Unlimited
U.S. Apple Association
US Canola Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
US Dry Bean Council
U.S. Sweet Potato Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
United Way Worldwide
US Rice Producers Association
USA Rice
Utahns Against Hunger
Vermont Foodbank
Vineyard Community Church
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West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Western Growers Association
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Peanut Growers Association
Western Society of Weed Science
Western United Dairymen
Wholesome Wave
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi
Windmark Crop Division, City Bank Texas
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Pork Association
Women Involved in Farm Economics
WoodWorks - Wood Products Council
Wyoming Farm Bureau
World Wildlife Fund
Wyoming Wildlife Federation