

Chairman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
General Debate on H.R. 7608 (Minibus I)
July 23, 2020

Floor Statement

I rise in support of H.R. 7608. As Chairman of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug, and Related Agencies subcommittee I am pleased to highlight the national priorities funded in the division that covers this bill.

First, I would like to thank our distinguished Ranking Member Mr. Fortenberry. I hope he is not getting too tired of my endless thanks and praise, but it is genuine. Drafting legislation can be complicated, but we have been able to maintain an open line of communication. I am proud of our bipartisan relationship. We have produced a good work product that makes important investments that will improve the life of every American.

Our fiscal year 2021 allocation is almost \$24 billion – two percent above the FY 2020 and more than \$4.1 billion above the budget request.

The bill provides \$3.2 billion for Rural Development initiatives to fund critical infrastructure, such as water and wastewater systems, and rural housing needs.

The bill also funds the ReConnect program at \$990 million, an increase of \$435 million or 78 percent. I am extremely proud of the investments we make to close the digital divide. The Coronavirus pandemic has made everyone aware of how important it is for students and workers to be connected to the internet, and our bill reflects that.

The bill once again includes the 10-20-30 anti-poverty formula provision for Rural Development programs that is designed to target much needed federal resources to rural communities in need. Persistent poverty communities for too long have suffered from neglect and this provision will assist in reversing that and help these communities thrive.

The bill provides \$1.83 billion for farm production programs. I am particularly proud of the \$33 million in loan authority that will help resolve ownership and succession of farmland issues, also known as the “heir

property” issue, which predominately affects black farmers and has led to the loss of millions of acres of privately held farmland for over a century.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, hunger has become a new reality for millions of Americans. Our bill fully funds the SNAP, Child Nutrition, and WIC programs to meet expected participation in FY 2021. We also provided a big boost to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program which serves the elderly poor, who have been severely impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill also blocks two unconscionable SNAP rules – the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents final rule and the Standard Utility Allowance proposed rule – designed to restrict program eligibility.

The bill provides \$3.3 billion for agricultural research to ensure America retains its role as the leader of global agricultural science. That number includes an increase of \$29.5 million for programs that support the 1890s Land-Grant Institutions.

We rejected the administration’s proposed elimination of the Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole programs. Respectively we provide \$1.775 billion

and \$235 million for these programs, an increase totaling \$65 million, to ensure American agriculture remains an essential tool of diplomacy.

The Food and Drug Administration is funded at \$3.2 billion in discretionary funding. The increased funding is dedicated to new initiatives that would advance influenza vaccine technologies and enhance the safety of medical products and the nation's food supply, especially in light of COVID-19.

The bill also gives the FDA the authority to require mandatory recalls of unsafe prescription and over-the-counter drugs. This is the same authority that FDA already has to recall unsafe foods, infant formula, vaccines, and medical devices – a need that has become increasingly apparent in the past few weeks.

The bill also funds the Commodity Futures Trading Commission at \$304 million, which is the same as the request.

I am extremely proud of this division of the minibus and am supportive of the whole package. I urge my colleagues to support it.

I want to thank my personal staff, Michael Reed and Maya Solomon and the subcommittee staff, Martha Foley, Diem-Linh Jones, Perry Yates, Joe Layman, Randy Staples, Justin Masucci and our intern Xavier Roberts for their hard work on the bill. I also thank Tom O'Brien of the minority staff of the subcommittee as well as the minority staff of the full committee. And a special thanks to our Majority Clerk, Shalanda Young, for her steady hand in leading the majority full committee staff.

Thank you to Ranking Member Granger for your hard work and commitment to public service.

Finally, I want to say a special thank you to Chairwoman Lowey. It has been a tremendous pleasure and honor to work with you! We will all miss you next year.

Thank you and I yield back.