

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 5, 2018

The Honorable Michael Conaway  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson:

As the 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee undertakes its duty to ensure that all of our nation's farmers and ranchers are fully equipped for the increasing challenges of food production and safety, risk management, conservation, marketing, and trade, we urge you to invest in the future of agriculture as the key economic engine for rural communities. To ensure a sustainable future for our agricultural economy and food system, we need more farmers and ranchers throughout our nation. The growing populations of minority, tribal, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers stand ready to catalyze this agricultural future.

As Members of Congress with numerous minority, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers in our districts, we support the new authority in Section 12301 of the Senate bill as a prudent, efficient approach to merge the authorization of the Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Development Program (BFRDP) and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (OASDVFR). We urge the committee to adopt Section 12301 of the Senate bill as a substitute to Sections 7507 and 11201 of the House Bill.

While we are pleased that both the House- and Senate-passed bills include mandatory funding for these programs, only the Senate-passed Farm Bill does so in a way that provides certainty by establishing permanent baseline funding. Section 12301 of the Senate-passed bill combines the two programs into a new Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program with permanent authority funding of \$50 million per year, split evenly between the two program components. Adoption of this provision in the final Farm Bill package would also provide agency authority to streamline program delivery, improve responsiveness to stakeholders and emerging industry trends, and, most importantly, ensure long-term investment to help these farmers and ranchers access the resources they need to build successful and viable farms.

BFRDP is the only program specifically dedicated to training the next generation of producers. OASDVFR has, since 1990, been USDA's primary tool to ensure our nation's historically underserved producers gain access to USDA's credit, commodity, conservation, and other programs and services. It was expanded in 2014 to also serve military veterans. With additional demand for program resources from these growing sectors of agriculture and with our overall farm population continuing to age, Congress should scale up, not cut back on, support for our nation's most underserved communities.

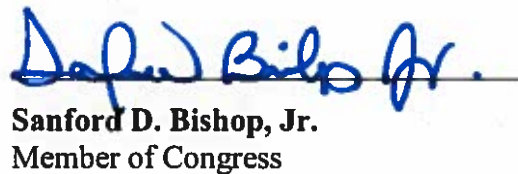
USDA's new authorities better link two deeply complementary programs that together provide an effective mix of education and training to new entry producers, and direct technical assistance to historically underserved producers. These programs support new entry and historically underserved producers through the community-based organizations, tribes and educational institutions best equipped to reach and serve these communities. USDA's new authorities better connect both programs to relevant advisory committees based in the Office of Advocacy and Outreach and ensure better operation of the programs. Permanent and sufficient funding for these critical programs represents a strategic investment in the diverse new generation of farmers and ranchers best positioned to expand economic development opportunities in rural, urban, and tribal communities, advance intergenerational land transfer, and promote familial and community wealth in thousands of rural and urban communities that would most benefit.

We look forward to working with conference committee to ensure these important changes are included in the final bill.

Sincerely,



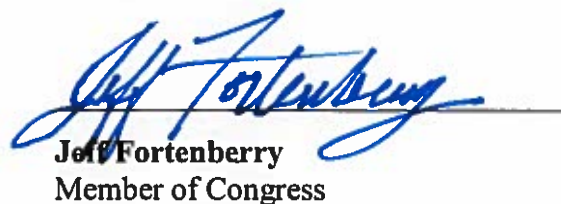
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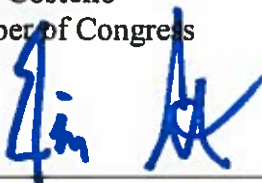
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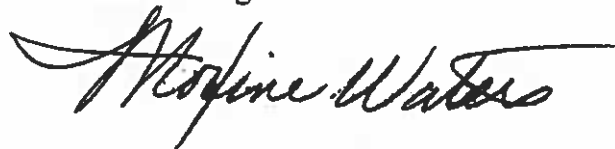
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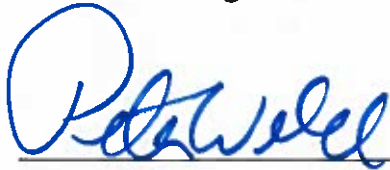
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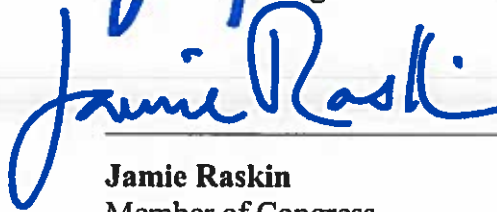
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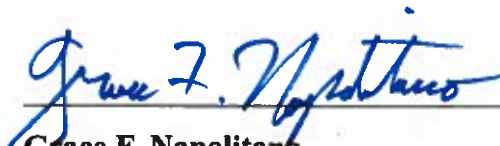
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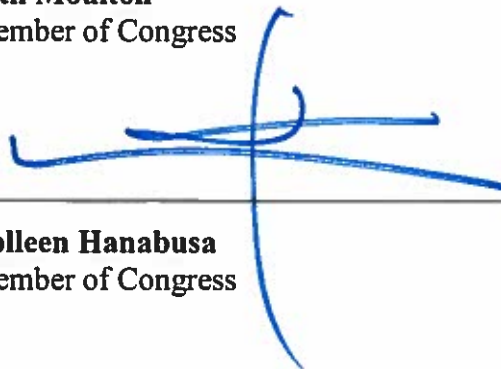
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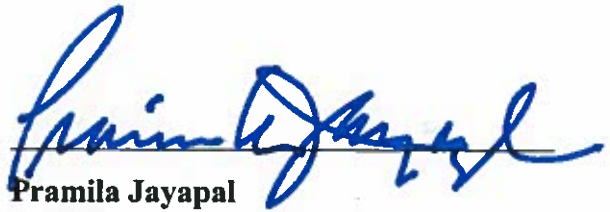


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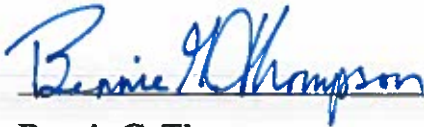
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