

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 30, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As members of the House Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on Agriculture Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, we write to express our concerns about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recent reorganization proposal, which would move the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) outside of Washington, D.C.

We care deeply about USDA's research agencies and their continued success. Farmers and consumers in our districts benefit daily from the work of ERS and NIFA, which have a worldwide reputation for identifying our most pressing agricultural issues and advancing innovative solutions to address those issues.

It is our understanding that USDA cited three reasons for its proposal to move ERS and NIFA outside of Washington, DC: difficulty with employee recruitment, the need to move resources closer to stakeholders, and savings associated with employment costs and rent. We respectfully ask that you provide data and analysis to justify each of these reasons, including:

- employee hiring data for ERS and NIFA for the last 5 years, including evidence that USDA has had difficulty recruiting ERS and NIFA staff;
- data on anticipated staff loss if ERS and NIFA relocate;
- estimated costs associated with relocation assistance;
- data on anticipated cost savings related to rent and locality pay;
- a detailed timeline for the proposed relocation; and
- the rationale for why ERS and NIFA, as opposed to other USDA agencies, need to move closer to stakeholders.

Lastly, we are concerned that ERS and NIFA employees were not given the opportunity to provide input on this significant decision. It worries us to hear reports that USDA's reorganization announcement has jeopardized morale not only in the two affected agencies, but also across the Department as employees wonder whether other agencies will also be relocated. We hope that you will seek input from USDA employees as you consider future Department decisions.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss USDA's reorganization plan with you. Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Member of Congress



Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress