

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

May 14, 2026

The Honorable Stephen Vaden
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Deputy Secretary Vaden:

We write with strong concern regarding the reorganization and restructuring of the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While we support actions to improve efficiencies and enhance service, this effort will erode the capacity of USDA's research agencies and threaten their ability to deliver innovation and timely economic data for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Previous relocations of the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in 2018 and 2019 resulted in dramatic staff losses, as outlined in a December 2022 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). In their publication, GAO noted that this relocation resulted in ERS and NIFA losing over half their staff, with the USDA failing to engage employees, Congress, and stakeholders throughout the relocation process or follow best management practices.

Agencies of the REE mission area were also impacted by dramatic staff losses in 2025, including a loss of over 30 percent of staff within the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). These staff losses have real and immediate impacts on farmers, with many stakeholders now questioning the reliability of USDA's own data reports. The REE reorganization and restructuring announced this April proposes to relocate REE mission area staff to over 27 different locations within months, but specific details of the relocations remain unclear. This could result in decreased agency capacity, further deteriorating the Department's ability to conduct research, administer funding, and produce timely and reliable data products.

In order to address these concerns, we ask that you provide a detailed description of actions the Department has taken to minimize disruptions to farmers, ranchers, and ag researchers and adhere to recommendations as outlined by GAO regarding agency reorganizations. Additionally, we ask that you detail your engagement with REE mission area staff, including plans to engage with staff covered by existing collective bargaining agreements as well as non-bargaining unit employees. Proactive and ongoing engagement with these employees will be necessary to prevent major disruptions to research, data collection, and education.

As strong supporters of USDA's research agencies, it is our goal to make sure the REE mission functions as Congress intends – focused on helping farmers, ranchers, and rural communities overcome the challenges they face through scientific innovation and complex data analysis.

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Thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to receiving your response within 30 days.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator




Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



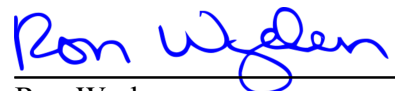
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator




Ron Wyden
United States Senator

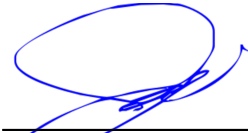
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Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



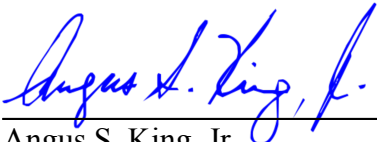
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



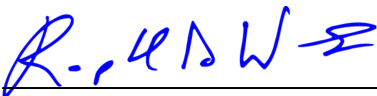
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



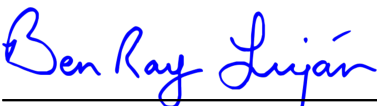
Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



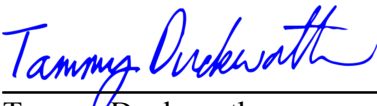
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

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Kirsten Gillibrand

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United States Senator

Patty Murray

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Chak Sch

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator