

November 13, 2018

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food  
and Drug Administration, and Related  
Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member, Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Hoeven and Aderholt and Ranking Members Bishop and Merkley:

We remain very concerned about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) plans for the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). As you finalize the FY19 spending bill that includes funding for USDA, we respectfully request you specify that no funding be used for relocation or realignment of ERS and that no funding be used for the NIFA relocation beyond that already provided for its relocation within the National Capital Region.

Our fundamental concern is that the proposed relocation and realignment will undermine the quality and breadth of the work these agencies support and perform – work that is vital to informing and supporting US agriculture, food and rural economies. The rationale provided by the USDA for the relocation also fails to identify problems substantive enough to justify such a disruption of ERS's and NIFA's operations. Finally, USDA's decision to move forward with the relocation and realignment without stakeholder and congressional input and without a cost-benefit analysis raises serious concern. We have explained these concerns in numerous letters and will not repeat them here.

We ask that you delay long-distance relocations of ERS and NIFA and the realignment of ERS at least until an independent and comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is completed and then a public hearing is conducted to hear from stakeholders. This delay is necessary in order for Congress and stakeholders to understand the problems USDA seeks to address and the ramifications of the USDA's proposed moves. It would also be informative to study alternative solutions to the problems, once illuminated and better characterized.

The USDA moves have the potential to reverse the significant progress your subcommittees have made in recent years to start revitalizing agricultural research, education, extension, and economics. The setbacks would be particularly acute if the USDA were allowed to proceed with its plan in FY19 and no additional appropriations are provided for relocation. Based on the approximately \$20 million provided for NIFA's local move, relocating each agency outside of Washington, DC is likely to cost tens of millions of dollars, costs likely to have to come out of ERS and NIFA programs. We urge you to delay these ill-considered changes that could jeopardize and compromise your good work in recent appropriations bills.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss these issues with you.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
American Association for Public Opinion  
Research  
American Association of Mycobacterial  
Diseases  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Educational Research Association  
American Malting Barley Association  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Statistical Association  
APB Associates  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public Data Users  
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association  
Center for Food Safety  
Center for Foodborne Illness Research &  
Prevention  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Consumer Federation of America  
Council of Professional Associations on  
Federal Statistics

Decision Demographics  
FASS  
Food & Water Watch  
Food Animal Concerns Trust  
Food Research and Action Center  
Global Harvest Initiative  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
International Center for Technology  
Assessment  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Maine Farmland Trust  
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multi-State  
Initiative  
National Barley Improvement Committee  
National Farmers Union  
National Organic Coalition  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Turfgrass Federation  
National WIC Association  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
North American Regional Science Council  
Northeast Organic Farming Association-  
Interstate Council  
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association  
Oregon State University Center for Small  
Farms & Community Food Systems  
Organic Farming Research Foundation

Organic Seed Alliance  
Pinnacle Prevention  
Population Association of America  
Restaurant Services, Inc.  
Rural Sociological Society  
The Common Market  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholders  
World Perspectives, Inc.  
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation