

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to assist farmers as they face unique challenges on account of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. As the bipartisan co-chairs of the Congressional Dairy Farmer Caucus and members who represent dairy farmers, we urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to do all it can to help dairy farmers weather this time of incredible hardship.

Dairy farms are the backbone of rural economies across the country. Dairy farmers continue to put themselves at risk by working around the clock to provide products to consumers during this difficult time. However, the dairy industry is now facing unprecedented and extensive economic damage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The foodservice market has collapsed overnight due to closures of schools and restaurants, and export disruptions are harming milk powder demand. The decrease in demand for finished products has caused processing plants to curtail or cease operations and cancel fluid milk orders. Farmers are being forced to dump milk and milk prices are plummeting. Dairy farmers have already seen losses of more than \$5.7 billion due to this crisis.

We ask that you use as many tools as possible, as quickly as possible, to address this crisis in the dairy industry. These tools could include but are not limited to paying producers to reduce production, compensate producers for milk that must be dumped, provide capital for processors to expand their capacity and increase their inventory, purchase dairy products for food banks, reopen the Dairy Margin Coverage Program and make the sign up retroactive, and work to increase international food aid.

Dairy farmers need support immediately. We urge you to use your authority to provide support directly to producers. The CARES Act provides the USDA with \$9.5 billion to assist producers and specifically cites dairy in the statutory language. We ask that you take immediate action to support this critical industry.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. We look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming weeks and months on behalf of dairy farmers.

Sincerely,



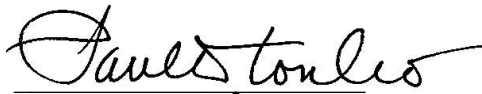
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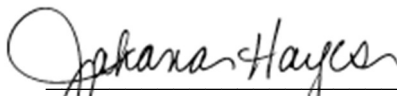
CHRISSY HOULIHAN
Member of Congress



TOM O'HALLERAN
Member of Congress



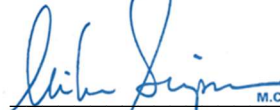
ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER
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JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress



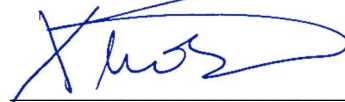
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