

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,

American Association for Public Opinion
Research

American Association of Mycobacterial
Diseases

American Dairy Science Association

American Educational Research Association

American Phytopathological Society

American Public Health Association

American Society for Nutrition

American Statistical Association

APB Associates

Association of Population Centers

Association of Public Data Users

Center for Food Safety

Center for Foodborne Illness Research &
Prevention

Center for Rural Affairs

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Consumer Federation of America

Council of Professional Associations on
Federal Statistics

Decision Demographics

Department of Agriculture & Consumer
Economics, University of Illinois

Food & Water Watch

Food Animal Concerns Trust

Food Animal Science Societies

Global Harvest Initiative

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 Farmers Union

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

National WIC Association

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

Union of Concerned Scientists

US Dairy Forage Research Center Stakeholders

World Perspectives, Inc.

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation