

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Perdue:

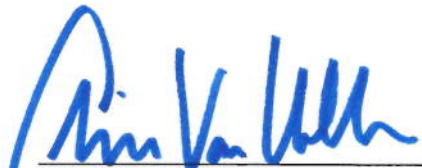
We write to express our concern regarding the recent announcement outlining your intent to reorganize the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), specifically the proposal that would relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) away from the National Capital Region.


Recognizing that these agencies employ 700 people—many of whom are our constituents—this restructuring will hurt the mission of the USDA. These agencies are national research agencies that provide vital information on national and local issues. In order to provide this top of the line research, ERS and NIFA need to be able to coordinate with other U.S. statistical agencies as well as other national advocacy groups that are connected to on the ground efforts, which are headquartered in the National Capital Region.


Additionally, we are troubled by the proposal to move ERS to the Office of the Secretary. Moving ERS to a political office will threaten the independence of the research conducted by USDA employees no matter the Administration in charge.


While we appreciate your efforts to bring many of the best services the USDA has to offer to its stakeholders, this relocation would ultimately be a disservice to all. Therefore, as Senators representing these hard-working USDA employees, we urge you to reconsider this proposed reorganization.

Sincerely,


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senate


Mark R. Warner
United States Senate


Tim Kaine
United States Senate