

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeffrey Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

We appreciate the subcommittee not cutting mandatory funding for Farm Bill conservation programs in the FY 2019 omnibus bill. As your subcommittee considers its fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations bill, we write to request that you continue to support full mandatory funding for Farm Bill conservation programs. It is essential that we protect the mandatory funding provided in the 2018 Farm Bill, which was recently signed into law and received 87 votes in the Senate – the most ever in support of a farm bill.

As you know, Farm Bill conservation programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) help farmers, foresters, and ranchers conserve water, protect water quality, and improve soil health, which in turn helps agricultural production. These programs are increasingly important to the long-term viability of family farms as producers face challenges such as drought, wildfire, and floods. Improving soil health and water quality, and providing robust wildlife habitat, is critical as our growing population increases pressure on private agricultural lands.

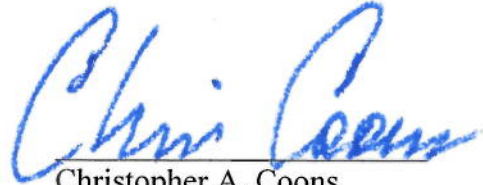
As the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) moves forward with implementing the 2018 Farm Bill, any cuts to conservation programs would limit the ability of farmers, ranchers, and foresters to implement commonsense practices to address natural resource challenges. Less funding for voluntary conservation programs means more pollution, more regulation, and less productive and profitable farmlands. It also means significant application backlogs as demand outpaces available funds. Demand for EQIP and CSP consistently exceeds available dollars by at least two to one. In some years, USDA has been forced to turn away as many as three-quarters of eligible applicants.

In summary, Farm Bill conservation programs help keep working farms and ranches productive while achieving significant environmental benefits. Any cuts to these programs through the appropriations process would leave producers without the resources to prepare for and manage the extreme weather events and natural resource challenges that they face each season. We urge you to give full support to mandatory funding for Farm Bill conservation programs in your FY 2020 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



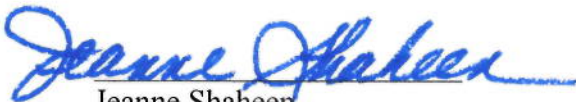
Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
U.S. Senator



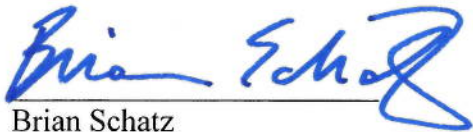
Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Brian Schatz
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Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



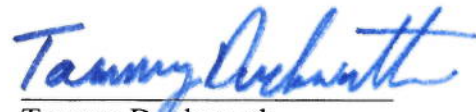
Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator



Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator




Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator



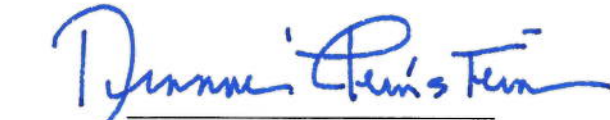
Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
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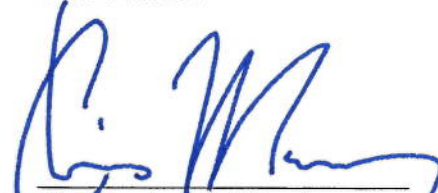

Richard J. Durbin
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Catherine Cortez Masto
U.S. Senator

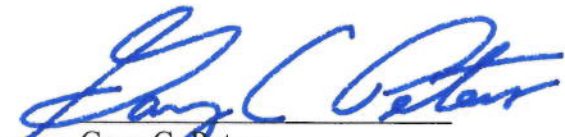

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

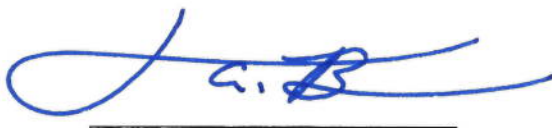

Sherrod Brown
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Kamala D. Harris
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Christopher S. Murphy
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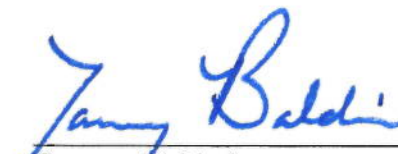

Tina Smith
U.S. Senator

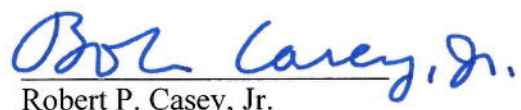

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U.S. Senator


Cory A. Booker
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Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator


Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator


Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



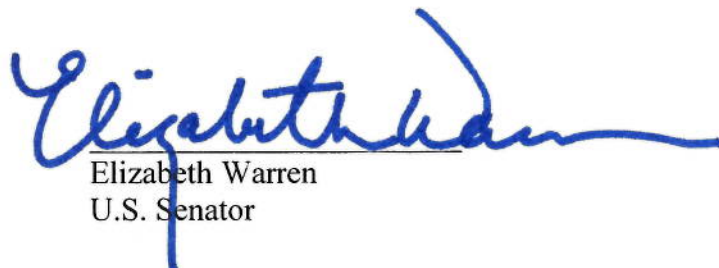
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator



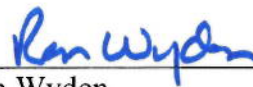
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U.S. Senator



Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator



Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator