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March 31, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Heinrich and Ranking Member Hoeven:

As you prepare the Committee's Fiscal Year 2024 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we write to ask for your support for the urban agriculture provisions in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. We respectfully request that you provide \$25,000,000 to fund the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and \$14,000,000 for a one-time data collection of urban agriculture activities across the country.

Urban agriculture has many community benefits. It presents a pathway to improve food security and nutrition in our nation's most vulnerable communities. In places with high rates of food insecurity, urban agriculture is already filling an important gap. COVID-19 is a perfect example of this, as urban residents increasingly relied on community farms, small backyard gardens, etc when this country faced food supply chain challenges as a result of the pandemic. Urban farmers are not only growing fruits and vegetables within the city's limits, but they are also focusing on strategies to ensure fresh produce reaches low-income families.

Urban farms are stimulating local economies by creating jobs and providing opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Many urban farming initiatives invest in youth development and beginning farmer programs, giving young people the opportunity to develop new skills and pursue careers in agriculture production. Many beginning farmers start farming on urban farms and move out to rural communities to expand their operation. Additionally, urban agriculture provides important environmental benefits and has the potential to create green space, capture carbon, and absorb storm water runoff.

Over the past three decades, urban agriculture has grown by more than thirty percent in the United States, but it needs federal support to continue this momentum and reach its full potential. In December 2018, Congress passed a strong, bipartisan Farm Bill that recognizes the importance of urban agriculture by establishing an Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This Office supports urban agriculture and innovative production through policy development, grants, pilot projects, and management of a federal Advisory committee. These urban agriculture activities include everything from urban farms and community gardens in cities and small towns, to rooftop production, indoor and vertical farms, as well as hydroponic and aquaponics production systems.

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The Office serves as a critical point of contact for urban agriculture stakeholders across the country. Equally important, the Office coordinates with other USDA agencies and officials to integrate urban agriculture into existing programs and activities, helping urban farmers access the Department's technical assistance, extension services, and other farm resources. In addition to creating an office for urban agriculture at the USDA, the 2018 Farm Bill authorizes a one-time data collection of urban agriculture activities in the United States. This study will provide policy makers with critical insight into the scope and size of urban agriculture activities across the country. This study will not only inform the activities of the Office but also help direct any future policy development to support urban agriculture.

Urban farms have proven successful across the country and offer an exciting opportunity for communities to engage in agriculture production. We will need federal dollars to support additional innovative farming systems. We appreciate your consideration of our request for a combined \$39 million and look forward to working with you to promote urban agriculture.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator
Chairwoman, Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



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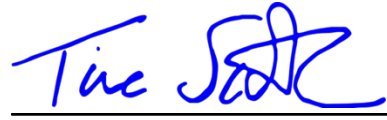
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United States Senator



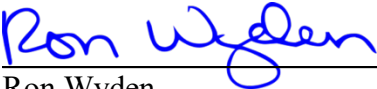
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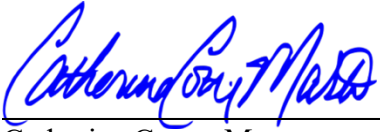
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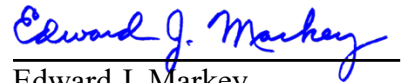
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