

April 10, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Heinrich, Ranking Member Hoeven, Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Bishop:

We, the undersigned food and agriculture organizations and farm businesses, thank you for all your work to support a vibrant and sustainable food and farm system. We particularly appreciate your ongoing support for initiatives that support and grow urban agriculture nationwide. The 2018 Farm Bill authorized the creation of an Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and an urban agriculture data collection initiative, critical first steps in serving this growing sector of the U.S. agricultural economy. We applaud your efforts to fund the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production at \$8.5 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

As you work to develop the FY 2024 agriculture appropriations bill, we recommend the inclusion of \$25 million to expand the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and related activities and \$14 million to launch the urban agriculture data collection initiative.

As one component of local and regional food systems, urban agriculture generally refers to the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban settings. Urban agriculture is longstanding and has begun to take many different forms, including outdoor and indoor vertical production, indoor warehouse farms, greenhouses, community gardens, rooftop farms, and even hydroponic and aquaponic facilities. Ultimately, agriculture in these settings produces an array of economic benefits for both urban and surrounding regions.

Additionally, agriculture production in these regions can help foster community engagement, local economic development, and environmental resiliency among diverse populations. Growers engaged in this work have helped expand food access in urban and suburban parts of the country and provide many environmental services, including carbon and heat sinks, as well as storm water absorption to mitigate flooding. Urban farms and agricultural enterprises promote greater biodiversity, access to nutritious foods, health education, and circular economy practices, like composting. For many beginning farmers, urban agriculture is one pathway to start farming, gain experience, and expand operations into rural communities. Finally, this type of production has proven able to diversify and supplement producers' incomes.

Urban farming has grown more than 30 percent in the U.S. in the last thirty years. A recent study found that urban agriculture has the potential to produce about 10 percent of the global output of vegetables. In a country where the population in urban areas is steadily increasing, we must consider how Congress can embrace this type of production and support its practices. There is great potential for urban agriculture to help address the poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity that often comes as a result of urbanization.

Due to the overwhelming interest in the program, we recommend that full funding of \$25 million be included in the FY 2024 agriculture appropriations bill in order to provide the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production with the resources necessary to fund more than just a handful of projects in a few select states. Furthermore, we recommend an additional \$14 million for the urban agriculture data collection initiative.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to the importance of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Thank you for taking time to consider this request, and we look forward to partnering with you in the future to promote urban agriculture.

Sincerely,

Appetite For Change
Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture
Auntie Nas House/Village
Blue Valley Greens
Brightmoor Artisans Collective
Cadillac Urban Gardens
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture
Compost Collective KC
Cross Pollination Corridor Project

Crows Nest Farm
Cultivate Kansas City
Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund
Detroit Food Policy Council
Detroit Urban Farm Life
Dirt Beast Farm
Down East CAESJC/Goldsboro Resilience Hub
Farm to Table - New Mexico
Farms by Amber, LLC
Feedom Freedom Growers
Fresh Green Farm
Friends of Highland Park, MI
Fruit Farm
Global One Urban Farming
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition
Green Boots Veteran Community Gardens
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
Groundwork NRG
Herdsman House Farm, LLC
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kanas Rural Center
Kansas City Black Urban Growers, Inc.
KC Healthy Kids
Keep Growing Detroit
Linwood Area Ministry Place
Longfellow Farm
Love N Labor Farm
MSU - Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning, and Innovation
National Center for Frontier Communities
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
New Roots for Refugees
Occupy Yourselves Agriculture
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ophelia's Blue Vine Farm
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
Pepper Berries Urban Farm
Plant Chicago

PVHC

RAFI-USA (Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA)

Renewing the Countryside

Root Mass Farm

Sanctuary Farms

Schumack Home Farm

Seedfolx Farm

Sprout NOLA

The Giving Grove

The Kansas City Food Hub

The Maurin Academy

Union of Concerned Scientists

Unique Gardens LLC

Urban Youth Agriculture

URBAVORE Urban Farm

We 3 Queens Community Outreach INC

WJP Urban Farms

Woodland City KC

Workin Rootz

Young Family Farm KC