

July 21, 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:

As you work in the coming weeks and months to enact a Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Bill, the undersigned 140 organizations and farm businesses strongly urge you to include funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production in any final FY2024 appropriations legislation.

Recently, more than 50 Congressional leaders in the [Senate](#) and [House](#) - along with over [70 stakeholder organizations](#) from around the country - called for full funding for OUAIP. Despite these calls, both the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees failed to include funding for OUAIP in their respective FY2024 proposals. This lack of funding threatens to slow the progress of the Office that has continuously grown in popularity to the extent that demand is far outpacing available funding: only an average of 20 percent of eligible OUAIP grant requests are funded.

The Office of Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production (OUAIP), first established in the bipartisan Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, provides support to urban farmers creating or expanding their businesses, encourages and promotes controlled environment agriculture and other emerging practices, promotes municipal food waste reduction strategies, and fosters community food security through networks of growers, partners, and community members.

Since OUAIP received its first appropriation in 2020, it has quickly responded to nationwide interest by investing over \$57 million in 184 grants and 82 cooperative agreements to increase the capacity of urban agriculture, innovative producers, and municipal composting initiatives in local communities across 43 states and Puerto Rico. In order to improve outreach to growers and meet growing demand for USDA production and conservation services in urban areas, OUAIP has established Farm Service Agency urban county office committees and USDA service centers

across the country - in Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Illinois, New York, Michigan, and California. OUAIP coordinates with NRCS and FSA to identify and eliminate barriers for urban and innovative producers while disseminating best practices.

Urban farming has grown more than 30 percent in the U.S. in the last thirty years.ⁱ To ensure the needs of urban, indoor, and innovative producers are addressed broadly across USDA, OUAIP is working on structural, process, and culture change through service offerings and intra-agency coordination. Their work will help employees at all levels of the USDA to support agriculture regardless of the size of the operations, where it is located, or how the products are produced.

Urban and controlled environment agriculture continue to be a growing sector of the U.S. agricultural economy and – with full funding and support for OUAIP – has the potential to influence our food and farming systems in a way that invests in a diverse range of growing techniques that promote healthy communities, urban and rural economies, and resilient climates. OUAIP supports growing more food in community gardens, greenhouses, indoor vertical farms, and on rooftops and creates greater access to healthy foods through year round growing and a variety of market types such as local farm stands, mobile markets, and food pantries. Many of these urban farms are operated by and for people of color, unlike the broader farming sector, and increase access to farming opportunities for new, beginning, and underserved farmers.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production has demonstrated significant success to date through implementation of direct program offerings and technical coordination across agencies. We strongly encourage you to sustain the growth of the Office and its activities by including FY2024 funding that is at least commensurate with the FY2023 enacted level of \$8.5 million.

Sincerely,

National Organizations, Farms, and Businesses

80 Acres Farms
AeroFarms
ARCO Murray
Center for Food Security and Public Health
Community herd LLC
Controlled Environment Agriculture Alliance
Dream Harvest Farming Company LLC
Futurists in Farming and Ag
Gotham Greens
Green Era Sustainability, LLC
HEAL Food Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
International Fresh Produce Association
KOL Foods
National Center for Appropriate Technology

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Nature Fresh Farms Inc.
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Rural Coalition
Union of Concerned Scientists
Vertical Harvest Farms
Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Regional Organizations, Farms, and Businesses

4 Osprey
Academy for Global Citizenship
Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet
AgLanta_City of Atlanta Department of City Planning
Americana Community Center
Babylon Micro-Farms
Beartown Advisors LLC
Beyond Hunger
Bowery
BrightFarms
Bull City Farm
Chef Mikey LLC
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Coalition of Community Gardens, Inc.
Common Ground Producers and Growers, Inc.
Common Harvest Farms
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Conservation District
Contemporary Farmer, Inc.
CornWineOil Farms
CORY
County Board Supervisor - Green County WI
Crop One Holdings
Crop Swap LA
Cultivate Kansas City
Delaney Community Farm
Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund
Do More With Your Time™
Equity Advocates
Extremely 2 Dope LLC
Farm Alliance of Baltimore
Farm to Table - New Mexico
Farmacea, LLC
Feeding Illinois

First Grace Community Garden
Fresh Beets Urban Farm
Fresh Taste
Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce
Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition
Grow with the Flow, LLC
Harry Rhodes
Honeysuckle Market Garden
HOOD CHIKZ
HOPE Collaborative
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Incahoots Farm
Island Grown Initiative
Julian Samora Research Institute - Michigan State University
Kansas Rural Center
Keep Growing Detroit
Khalifah Initiative
LaDonna zHrren
Liberty Farm and Boricua Garden in Highland Park, MI
Little Leaf Farms
Longfellow Farm
Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization, Inc.
Maricopa County Food System Coalition
McCauley Family Farms LLC
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Michigan Farmers Market Association
Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS)
Mile High Farmers
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Misty Dawn Farm LLC
MOTHERLAND COMMUNITY PROJECT
Mudpuppy Farms
Nancy's Bees
New Brooklyn Farms
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council
Nourish Colorado
Occupy Yourself
Offshootz
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
Penobscot Nation
Penobscot Tribal Farms
Permaculture & Soil Education Outreach
Plant Chicago
Plenty Unlimited Inc.

Prosperous Boyles Tree Fruit Wine Orchard & Company
Proviso Partners for Health
Pure Green Farms
RAFI- USA
Ramshackle Farm
Renewing the Countryside
Revolution Community 313
Rhode Island Food Policy Council
Root Mass Farm
Rowan Food and Farm Network
Sanctuary Farms
Seven Valleys Health Coalition
Sly Manor Community Garden
Sola Gratia Farm
Southside Food Co-op
Springfield Food Policy Council
Sprout NOLA
Syntax Land Design, LLC
The Kansas City Food Hub
The Land Connection
The Land Conservancy of McHenry County
The M.A.R.M. Farm (Milwaukee Area Renewal Movement)
The Zoo City Farm and Food Network
Treehouse Urban Farm
Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College
Urban Farm and Garden Alliance
Urban Growers Collective, Inc.
UW Extension Milwaukee County Urban Agriculture Program
Veggielution Community Farm
Village Exchange Center
WellFed Community
Wild Trillium Farm
Will County, Illinois
WMJOA LLC.
Woodland City KC

cc:

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
The Honorable GT Thompson, Chair, House Committee on Agriculture
The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture

ⁱ Siegner A, Sowerwine J, Acey C. Does Urban Agriculture Improve Food Security? Examining the Nexus of Food Access and Distribution of Urban Produced Foods in the United States: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability*. 2018; 10(9):2988. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10092988>