



Feb. 26, 2024

Sen. Debbie Stabenow  
Chair, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition  
and Forestry Committee  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sen. John Boozman  
Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition  
and Forestry Committee  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Rep. G.T. Thompson  
Chair, House Agriculture Committee  
400 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Rep. David Scott  
Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee  
468 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Brian Patrick Kennedy**  
Speaker Pro Tempore  
Rhode Island General  
Assembly  
President, NCSL

**Sabrina N. Lewellen**  
Deputy Director - Senate  
Assistant Secretary of the  
Senate  
Arkansas General Assembly  
Staff Chair, NCSL

**Tim Storey**  
Chief Executive Officer  
NCSL

## RE: 2024 Farm Bill Reauthorization

Chair Stabenow, Chair Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the bipartisan organization representing the legislatures of our nation's states, commonwealths and territories, we write to reiterate our encouragement for swift, bipartisan passage of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is a vital piece of historically bipartisan legislation that governs not only American farms, but also nutrition standards, rural economic development, infrastructure, wildfire mitigation and so much more. States continue to stand ready to work with you on reauthorization of this crucial bill.

As Congress continues to negotiate language, NCSL reinforces our support for the following:

### **Maintain Current Support for Conservation and Forest Management Programs**

Protecting our nation's most sensitive ecosystems starts with the efforts of our farmers, ranchers and foresters. NCSL supports reauthorizing the Farm Bill's voluntary conservation and forest management programs to ensure the resilience and continued success of these industries. Any new land policies the Farm Bill enacts should be closely coordinated with states to promote policy alignment at the state and federal levels and provide the best return on investment for all parties involved.

NCSL also advocates for the adoption of effective measures and practices to reduce nutrient losses from both point and nonpoint sources to safeguard our water resources and urges the federal government to provide funding for state-supported initiatives, particularly those focused on watersheds.

### **Preserve Funding for Research and Development Initiatives**

Agricultural research and extension programs play a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency, innovation and productivity of our nation's farmers and ranchers. NCSL supports adequate funding for agricultural research,

including support for land-grant institutions to conduct critical research and develop innovative products. This is essential to maintaining the global competitiveness of our nation's agriculture sector.

Additionally, NCSL recognizes the importance of a robust agricultural research program that facilitates the development of effective, affordable and environmentally sustainable methods for controlling and eradicating insect and plant pests as well as animal diseases. This research must be conducted in close collaboration with states to help mitigate the impacts of disease and secure our nation's food supply chain.

### **Support a New Agriculture Workforce to Sustain Critical Food Supply Chains**

The agriculture workforce is facing a significant challenge as the current workforce ages. As states work to support new and beginning farmers, Congress must do the same. The latest Census of Agriculture documents the rising average age of farmers, indicating that more than a third of farmers are 65 or older. As first-generation farmers and ranchers attempt to enter the field, they encounter several obstacles, such as access to education, land, child care, financing and more.

NCSL advocates for a collaborative state-federal approach to address the challenges new and beginning farmers face. NCSL supports beginning farmer programs and other training initiatives that benefit military veterans, traditionally underserved communities and other limited-resource farmers.

### **Support a Robust and Stable Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides a key benefit to 42 million low-income individuals and families in our states. Having a stable and sufficiently funded SNAP program that assists all who are eligible and is responsive to the rising cost of food is important to those administering benefits across the country. NCSL supports policies that continue to improve access and affordability of nutritious food for millions of families in the United States as well as the objectives of self-sufficiency promoted by the SNAP Employment and Training program.

NCSL opposes any federal proposals that would impose costly administrative burdens or unfunded mandates on states and/or that would remove state flexibility in the administration of SNAP. We therefore urge Congress to protect remaining waiver flexibilities in the SNAP provisions of the Farm Bill in light of the fact that the Fiscal Responsibility Act decreased states' annual allotment of SNAP discretionary exemptions and limited states' ability to carry over unused discretionary exemptions.

### **Catalyze Economic Development and Support Rural Communities**

A strong state-federal partnership is essential to strengthen our rural communities. NCSL supports programs that leverage existing institutions to build balanced and sustainable growth in rural America. Such programs should help rural communities engage in strategic planning that not only ushers in technological innovation, but also leads to increased investment in infrastructure development and job opportunities.

NCSL urges Congress to make high-speed internet expansion into rural communities a priority. The absence of this crucial utility places many families in these communities at a disadvantage in our economy. Building America's digital infrastructure is essential to unlocking the potential of rural areas, enabling businesses to grow and compete in the global marketplace and improving access to healthcare and education.

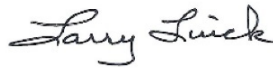
NCSL stands ready to work with Congress throughout the Farm Bill reauthorization process to ensure certainty and stability for America's farmers, ranchers, foresters and SNAP recipients. If you have any questions regarding the priorities outlined above, please do not hesitate to contact the following NCSL staff: for agriculture and rural development purposes please contact Ben Nasta at 202-624-3597, or [benjamin.nasta@ncsl.org](mailto:benjamin.nasta@ncsl.org); for SNAP provisions please contact Lauren Kallins at 202-624-8170, or

[lauren.kallins@ncsl.org](mailto:lauren.kallins@ncsl.org); and for broadband provisions please contact Barrie Tabin at 202-624-8698 or [barrie.tabin@ncsl.org](mailto:barrie.tabin@ncsl.org).

Sincerely,



Senator Katie Fry Hester  
NCSL Natural Resources, Energy and  
Environment Committee Co-Chair  
Maryland State Senate



Senator Larry Luick  
NCSL Natural Resources, Energy and  
Environment Committee Co-Chair  
North Dakota State Senate



Representative Rick Hansen  
NCSL Agriculture Task Force Co-Chair  
Minnesota House of Representatives



Senator Annette Sweeney  
NCSL Agriculture Task Force Co-Chair  
Iowa State Senate



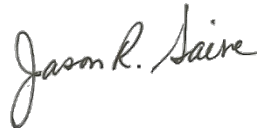
Senator Joan Ballweg  
NCSL Children, Families and  
Human Services Committee Co-Chair  
Wisconsin State Senate



Representative Lisa Reynolds  
NCSL Children, Families and  
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Representative Angelo J. Puppolo  
NCSL Technology and Communications  
Committee Co-Chair  
Massachusetts House of Representatives



Representative Jason Saine  
NCSL Technology and Communications  
Committee Co-Chair  
North Carolina House of Representatives

CC: All members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
All member of the House Committee on Agriculture