

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide immediate direct financial assistance to help family pork and beef producers with stabilizing cash flow and mitigate marketplace disruptions in the wake of the economic emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Congress provided \$14 billion in Commodity Credit Corporation funds and another \$9.5 billion for USDA to provide direct support to commodity, livestock and other agricultural producers who face serious financial jeopardy during this crisis.

Sudden price declines have harmed on-farm operations of hog and cattle producers. Major market shifts away from restaurants and hospitality purchases towards increased retail grocery purchases also have contributed to these livestock price changes. Reverberations have extended well into the supply chain, from livestock housing challenges and maintenance costs, to workforce disruptions due to illness or social distancing precautions, imperiling the processing, transportation and delivery of retail products. Federal support also should be provided to stabilize the supply chain. That support also should recognize the critical contributions of on-farm, food and guest workers in maintaining these food networks, and must support protecting their personal and workplace health, safety and financial security.

This crisis also has increased pressure on wasteful disposals or culling at a time when many families are struggling to afford or access food from lost income and when food pantries are grappling with increased demand. USDA authorities should be pursued for purchasing, storing, distributing or encouraging donations of these commodities to mitigate food waste, shore-up livestock market imbalances, and help household food security.

Finally, any financial assistance must preserve the future policy and financial integrity of these USDA emergency authorities. Direct short-term assistance should prioritize resource-limited family-sized hog and beef operations who are in the greatest financial jeopardy, ensure that all financial disbursements are equitable according to need, and supported by proper records and documents of losses. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator