Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 28, 2017

The Honorable George "Sonny" Perdue
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to congratulate you on your recent confirmation as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and to urge you to support suitable and responsible funding for the programs that fall under your purview. As Governor of Georgia, you demonstrated a robust understanding of the economic importance of the many contributions our country's farmers make to their communities. With this understanding in mind, we are looking forward to working with you to keep agricultural systems healthy and strong throughout the state of Delaware and across the country.

In an era of unheralded proposed discretionary budget cuts and low agricultural commodity prices, the importance of strong leadership at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has never been more critical. As you know, USDA's budget is targeted for a 21 percent reduction in President Trump's initial budget blueprint issued in March 2017. This budget proposal would lead to cuts in critical USDA programs nationwide.

If enacted, these cuts will negatively affect not only rural Americans and the important agricultural industries on which they so heavily rely, but would also threaten all Americans via increased risks of pandemic diseases and uncertainty about our ability to protect the nation's food supply. For example, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) supports the prevention and mitigation of avian influenza through providing information to stakeholders, supporting surveillance in wild and commercial birds, and funding research to prevent and mitigate future outbreaks. Decreased funding for this important agency would decrease our nation's ability to adopt strong biosecurity measures that can monitor and prevent the spread of disease in the future.

In the State of Delaware, USDA funding supports a range of vital projects that are improving the lives of Delawareans. In fiscal year 2016 alone USDA provided a $500,000 Emergency Water Assistance grant to the town of Selbyville, which enabled the town to install a new water treatment plant capable of removing the dangerously high levels of volatile organic compounds present in its water wells. Also in 2016, USDA's Rural Energy for America Program assisted Delaware farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses in developing solar energy projects to the tune of $395,944 in grants. These grants improve energy efficiency, diversity, and security

across our great State. At the same time, USDA's Rural Development housing programs provided $143,809,293 to assist rural, low-income Delawareans in affording decent, safe, and sanitary housing.

Growing season after growing season, Delaware's hardworking farmers continue to deliver for Delawareans and Americans alike. We have a responsibility to deliver in return and, without these reasonable levels of funding from the department at your helm, we would be unable to do so. From the rural communities struggling to combat the opioid epidemic to the small towns relying on USDA grants to complete critical water and wastewater projects, it is clear to us that implementation of President Trump's budget proposal would do real harm across the Delmarva region. For these reasons, we urge you to reject further proposed budget cuts to USDA and to actively pressure President Trump to reevaluate a funding proposal that would leave rural America behind.

For you to gain firsthand insight into the importance of agriculture in the First State, we cordially invite you to come visit us in Delaware. Showing you our rural communities' commitment to continued agricultural excellence would be a sincere privilege for us and for Delaware's Secretary of Agriculture, Michael Scuse.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

With best personal regards, we are,

Sincerely yours,

Tom Carper
U.S. Senator

Christopher Coons
U.S. Senator

Lisa Blunt Rochester
U.S. Representative