

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Room H-305, The Capitol Room  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Today, America's agricultural enterprise faces several interconnected challenges, from climate change to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to growing competition from China and other nations. To provide solutions to these, and unseen crises, we write to respectfully request a robust investment of at least \$40 billion for agricultural climate research, agricultural innovation, and agricultural research infrastructure in any comprehensive infrastructure package that may move forward.

The federal share of overall research and development (R&D) spending as a percentage of GDP is now at its lowest point since the 1950s, and food and agriculture lags even further behind most other federal R&D areas. Agricultural research funding at the U.S. Department of Agriculture has remained flat over the last fifty years.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, funding for other federal research agencies has increased ten- to twenty-fold during the same period. Additionally, other countries, including China, Brazil, and India, are investing heavily in agricultural R&D, while the U.S. has fallen behind.<sup>2</sup> We need to make these significant investments in a timely fashion to win the R&D race.

By providing solutions to short- and long-term challenges, agricultural research and Extension make our food and agriculture sectors a powerhouse of the U.S. economy. A 2021 study shows that the food and agriculture sectors account for roughly one-fifth of the country's economic activity, directly supporting nearly 20 million jobs. That's more than 13% of U.S. employment. Total jobs indirectly supported by food and agriculture reach almost 41 million jobs. The total output of these sectors is \$7 trillion.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, a recent study found that U.S. public food and agriculture R&D spending from 1910 to 2007 returned, on average, \$17 in benefits for every \$1 invested.<sup>4</sup> Strategic investment in agricultural research, agricultural innovation, and agricultural research infrastructure will provide socially disadvantaged and beginning producers, along with established producers, the tools and knowledge they need to be successful in the twenty-first century, which will in turn strengthen the U.S. agriculture and food sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Federal Funds for Research and Development. <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2021/ncses21200/ncses21200.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Jahn, Molly. New solutions for a changing climate: The policy imperative for public investment in agriculture R&D. August 2020. [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/report\\_new-solutions-for-changing-climate\\_0.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/report_new-solutions-for-changing-climate_0.pdf). Pages 1, 13.

<sup>3</sup> <https://feedingtheeconomy.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Baldos, Uris Lantz, Frederi G. Viens, Thomas W. Hertel, and Keith O. Fuglie. R&D Spending, Knowledge Capital, and Agricultural Productivity Growth: A Bayesian Approach. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. July 2018. 101(1): 291–310; <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aay039>.

Increased funding for America's agriculture R&D programs will invest in our rural communities and give our farmers, ranchers, and foresters the tools needed to improve resiliency and scale climate-smart agriculture. Equally important are investments in the Cooperative Extension System, which plays a vital role in providing producers with locally relevant research-based solutions, tools, and trainings. This work will only become more important as farmers, ranchers, and foresters increase their efforts to implement innovative practices in the face of climate-induced production challenges.

In order to ensure our investments in agriculture R&D programs and the Cooperative Extension System are effective, however, we must also substantially improve the physical structures that house this vital work. Today, the situation at many agricultural research facilities is dire. Specifically, sixty-nine percent of the buildings at U.S. colleges and schools of agriculture are at the end of their useful life.<sup>5</sup> A transformative investment of, at a minimum, \$11.5 billion in agricultural research infrastructure through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture would be a historic step in an overall strategy to ensure the U.S. restores its global competitiveness in agricultural research and Extension. Strategic federal investment in these facilities at 1862, 1890, 1994, and insular land-grant and non-land-grant schools of agriculture would create hundreds of thousands of jobs nationwide.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to significantly fund food and agriculture research, innovation, and agricultural research infrastructure. These investments are crucial for the United States to achieve net zero emissions, reclaim our global leadership in food and agricultural science, and rise to meet today's crises and those in the future. We look forward to working with you to make these investments a reality.

Sincerely,



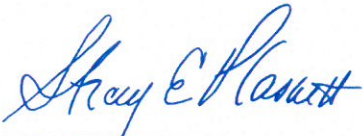
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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



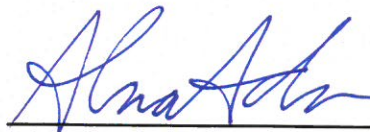
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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress

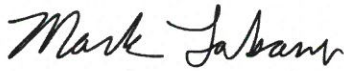


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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> Gordian, 2021. A National Study of Capital Infrastructure at Colleges and Schools of Agriculture <https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/News/new-study-sounds-alarm-about-agriculture-school-infrastructure>



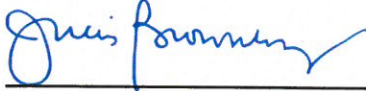
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MARK TAKANO  
Member of Congress



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Ed Case  
Member of Congress



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



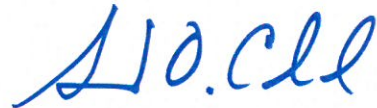
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Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



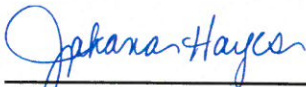
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Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



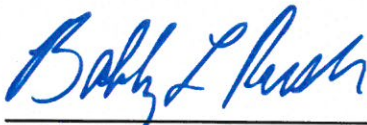
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



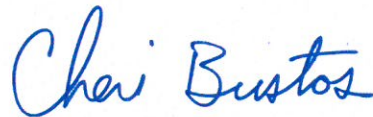
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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



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Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress



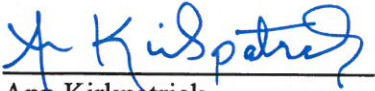
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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



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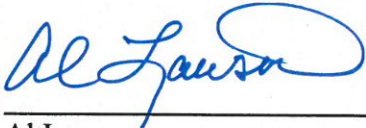
Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress



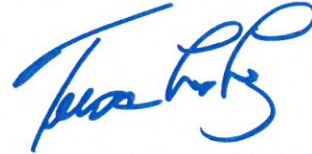
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



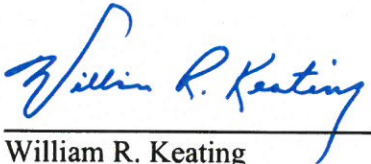
Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress



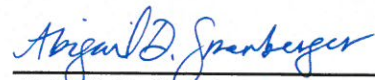
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



Kaiulani Kahele  
Member of Congress



Don Bacon  
Member of Congress



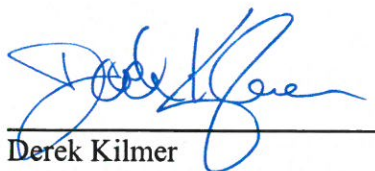
Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress



Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

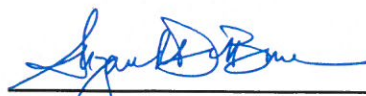


Deborah Ross  
Member of Congress



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Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress



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Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress



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Colin Allred  
Member of Congress