

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Congratulations on your confirmation as the next United States Secretary of Agriculture. We appreciate your recent comments underscoring your commitment to providing farmers with economic relief and disaster aid payments.¹ We write to further urge an expedited rulemaking process for the agricultural disaster relief funding provided by Congress this past December. Following the destruction caused by recent natural disasters, including the catastrophic damages caused by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, our agricultural producers are heavily relying on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to efficiently and fairly disperse this assistance. As you know, these natural disasters have caused irreparable damage to commodity and specialty crops, livestock, forestlands, and infrastructure, leaving farmers, ranchers, and foresters in desperate need of support. As the backbone of rural America, our workers in the agriculture and forestry industries desperately need access to the emergency funding Congress provided.

Our nation's agricultural producers are thankful for the \$110 billion disaster relief package that has been signed into law, and it is critical that the USDA efficiently deploys the \$20.78 billion in agriculture disaster relief aid to critical areas across the nation, especially in the Southeast. These losses have created an immediate financial burden on an already fragile agriculture economy. Over the past two years, farm income has dropped drastically. In 2023, farm income dropped by \$34.6 billion from the previous year, and in 2024, farm income dropped another \$8.2 billion.² This, coupled with the projected U.S. farm trade deficit to hit \$49 billion in fiscal year 2025, has left farmers facing difficult financial conditions under which to renew lines of credit for this year's growing season.³

Producers from vulnerable agriculture communities that were hit hard by these recent natural disasters are at risk of greatly downsizing or having to shut down their operations if the agricultural disaster relief funding is not fully accessible in the upcoming months. Clear direction and quick action from the USDA on disaster payment structure would provide certainty and, in many cases, a lifeline for farmers to continue their operations. Lack of clarity in the rulemaking process for natural disaster programs will prevent many farmers from fully utilizing the aid.

We appreciate the USDA's focus on this urgent matter. As you continue your role as the Secretary of Agriculture, we respectfully ask that you work to create transparent rulemaking in order to provide our producers a clear understanding of how to access these critical funds. We stand ready to collaborate with you and your team at the USDA to maximize the positive impact of this vital aid.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/03/03/secretary-rollins-delivers-remarks-commodity-classic-announces-next-steps-economic-disaster-relief>

² [https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-sector-income-finances/farm-sector-income-forecast#:~:text=Net%20farm%20income%2C%20a%20broad,to%20\\$140.7%20billion%20in%202024.](https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-sector-income-finances/farm-sector-income-forecast#:~:text=Net%20farm%20income%2C%20a%20broad,to%20$140.7%20billion%20in%202024.)

³ https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/outlooks/111066/AES-131.pdf?v=65039



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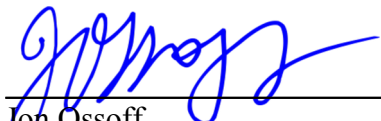
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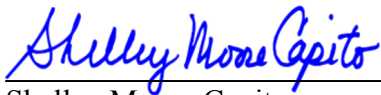
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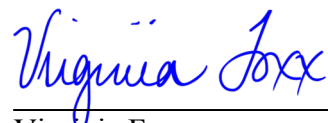
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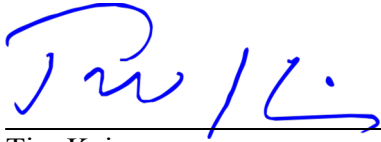
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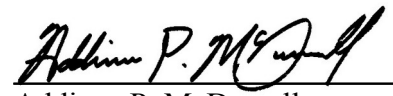
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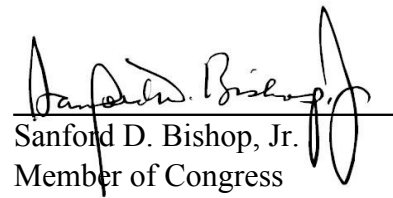
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