

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley:

The recently enacted Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) reaffirms the importance of the energy programs within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). That legislation provides mandatory funding for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, and it also authorizes discretionary appropriations for many of the programs. These programs contribute to the economic health and sustainability of rural America, and help to ensure our nation's energy security by increasing the production of home-grown advanced biofuels, bioproducts, and bioenergy. We therefore strongly recommend that you maintain all mandatory funding for USDA's energy programs, as authorized in the Farm Bill, and that you provide strong discretionary funding for these programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016.

Several of the USDA's energy programs play an especially critical role in improving energy systems in the agricultural sector, and in expanding rural America's energy and materials contributions to our national energy economy. For example, the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides significant incentives for agricultural producers and rural small businesses to make energy efficiency improvements, and to purchase or install renewable energy systems. REAP also generates much-needed job and economic benefits in every state, serves all agricultural sectors, and leverages private investment at a rate of approximately three-to-one through cost-sharing.

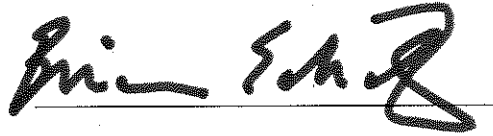
The Biorefinery Assistance Program provides financial incentives for the development of commercial-scale advanced biorefineries, reducing investor risk for emerging technologies and supporting well-paying jobs in rural communities. By providing grants and loan guarantees to producers of advanced biofuels, bio-based products, and renewable chemicals, this program is critical to diversifying feedstocks and opening new markets for agricultural products. Another important program is the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP), which provides financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and private forest land who wish to establish and produce sustainable, non-food biomass feedstocks for delivery to advanced biorefineries.

These are only some of the important energy programs within the USDA. We believe funding for USDA's energy programs should receive priority consideration within a fiscally responsible appropriations bill. With strong national interest in agriculture-based clean energy solutions, we urge you to support these funding priorities in FY 2016.

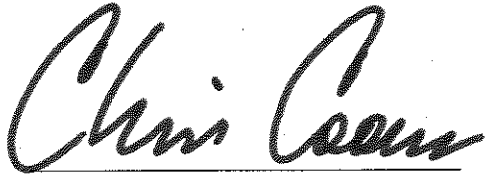
Sincerely,



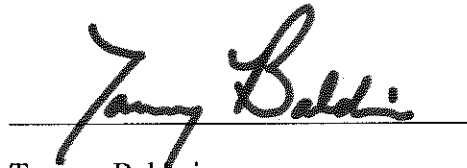
Al Franken
United States Senator



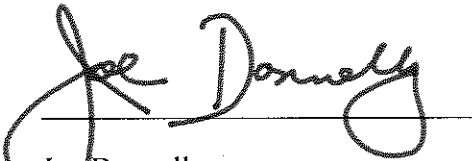
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



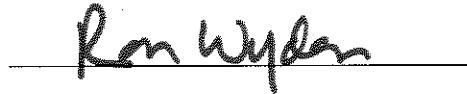
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



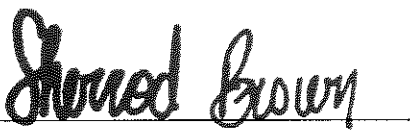
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



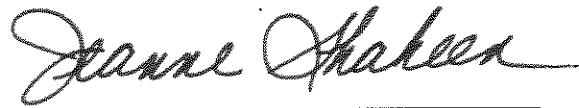
Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



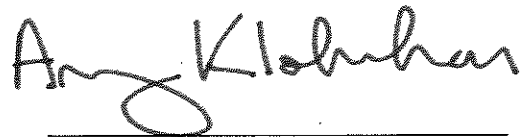
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator