

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2013

The Honorable Mark Pryor
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee
Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA,
and Related Agencies
129 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking, Appropriations Subcommittee
Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA,
and Related Agencies
190 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Blunt,

At this time of intense budget pressure, we are writing to thank the Committee for its past support for funding key food safety programs and urge you to robustly fund our food safety system in Fiscal Year 2014.

Food safety remains critical to the health and security of our nation. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that due to foodborne pathogens, 1 in 6 Americans will become ill, 128,000 will be hospitalized for serious illness, and 3,000 will die. Studies have estimated that the annual public health economic burden of the top 14 foodborne pathogens in the United States is over \$14 billion. Federal programs that ensure safe food protect the lives of American families and bolsters the stability of our nation's farmers. We must ensure food safety programs remain effective, and that we are able to confront new food safety challenges.

To accomplish this goal, we request that United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS) receive robust funding adequate to ensure food safety. FSIS has a mission to ensure the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products. We would also request you direct FSIS to ensure all human capital resources involved in critical ante-mortem inspections have received robust national training in Inspection Methods and the Public Health Information System in a consistent and prompt timeframe. This is important to enable the agency to ensure safe food and protect our agriculture system.

We also request that the Food & Drug Administration's Foods & Veterinary Medicine (FVM) program receive robust funding adequate to assure safe food. The FDA FVM program is responsible for assuring the safety of the vast remainder of food, as well as the safety of veterinary drugs used in food animals. In addition, FDA has recently released proposed rules to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) passed by Congress in 2010. We request additional funds be appropriated towards the goal of implementing FSMA. FSMA requires FDA to implement new food safety protections for preventive measures, animal feed safety, foreign supplier verification, enhanced consumer notification of recalls, and import assurance. It is critical the FDA is provided funding necessary to modernize our food safety system.

We are also requesting that, in addition to the main food safety programs, several other programs essential to ensuring the integrity of our food system including the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS), the Food Animal Residue Avoidance & Depletion (FARAD), the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) program are adequately funded. NARMS, with components in both FDA and USDA, monitors the levels of antimicrobial resistance in foodborne pathogens. NARMS data can also be critical in investigating major foodborne outbreaks, but better data entry could hasten the process and save lives. Therefore, the FDA should be directed to ensure that NARMS genetic data of pathogens uploaded into PulseNet should include the product brand, establishment number, and date of procurement, along with any other relevant information to improve the detection of foodborne illness outbreaks. The FARAD program provides farmers and veterinarians critical information to avoid drug residues in our meat and poultry supply. The NAHLN provides critical laboratory capacity for farmers and veterinarians to diagnose devastating animal diseases that threaten public health. These programs are small but critical to our agriculture and public health systems.

Finally, it is important that food safety functions are properly evaluated. Please ensure the Office of the Inspector General and the proposal in the President's Budget for a Chief Evaluation Officer function at the USDA receive full funding.

Sincerely,



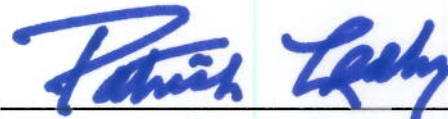
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United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator




Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



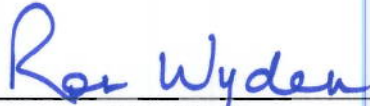
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United States Senator



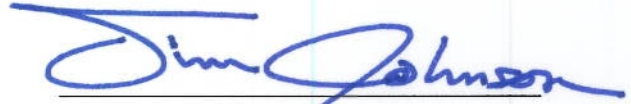
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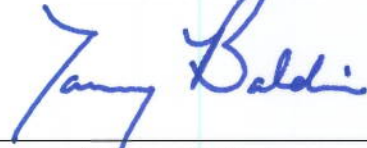
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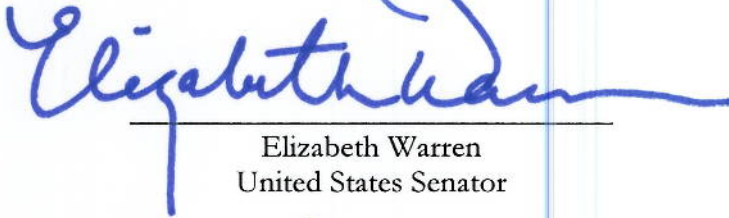
Tim Johnson
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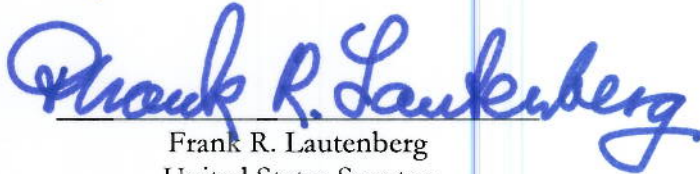
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