

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development,
FDA, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Andy Harris
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development,
FDA, and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Harris:

As you draft the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you invest in organic agriculture by funding key programs that underpin the sector's strong growth at the levels needed to make them successful. The organic agriculture sector is a growing industry that supports over 28,000 family farms and businesses, profitably producing food that consumers increasingly demand. The sector continues to experience substantial growth and grew by more than twelve percent in 2020 to over \$62 billion in annual sales.

Ensuring the continued growth of organic agriculture requires continuing the modest but important federal investment in organic agriculture. There is a critical set of national programs that work synergistically to provide the research, information, and regulatory oversight so that the industry can flourish. These programs are:

National Organic Program (NOP) – Fund at authorized level of \$24 million

NOP develops and enforces the national organic program standards, accredits certifiers, and arranges international equivalency agreements, – in essence, NOP performs regulatory oversight of the organic label, ensuring its integrity.

National Organic Program Report Language Request

We also request that the Committee include the following report language: “The committee requests that the National Organic Program provide a full report to Congress on their departmental budget with a breakdown on key expenditures such as compliance and enforcement activities and standards development. The committee also requests a breakdown of expenditures and status of the \$5 million in mandatory funding providing by the 2018 farm bill for NOP technology upgrades.”

Organic Certification Cost-Share Program (OCCSP)- \$5 million

The National Organic Certification Cost Share program is important to attracting new, young farmers to organic. Farms can receive up to \$750 each year (75% of the certification fee) to help defray the annual costs of organic certification. This program is typically funded through

mandatory farm bill spending, but in the last two years USDA announced that reimbursement rates for certification costs would be cut to 50 percent of the certified organic operation's eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope due to funding shortfalls. We urge the inclusion of this additional funding to ensure that organic farms and businesses can continue to count on this long-standing program to help offset their certification costs.

Organic Transitions Research Program (ORG) - \$10 million

ORG is a competitive research, education, and extension program that funds research that organic farmers need to improve and increase production. Funding ORG would help bridge the gap between organic sector growth and research investment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives (ODI) – Fund at authorized level of \$1 million

ODI is a multi-agency organic data collection initiative that collects information vital to maintaining stable markets, creating risk management tools, and negotiating equivalency agreements with foreign governments. Funding ODI would allow for continued price data collection and dissemination through Market News Reports.

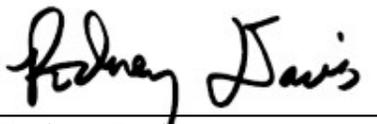
Funds invested in organic agriculture programs have accounted for less than one percent of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's budget in recent years, but the return on that investment has been substantial. Organic agriculture is a growing industry that provides jobs throughout the supply chain – from farm fields to businesses. We ask that you support its growth by funding the programs listed above and ensuring that USDA is applying uniform, consistent standards for organic production.

Thank you for considering our requests.

Sincerely,



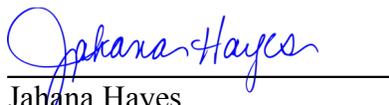
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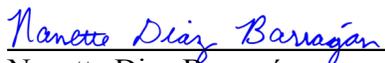
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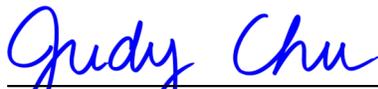
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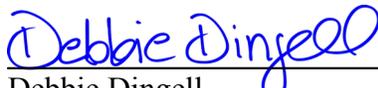
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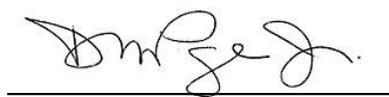

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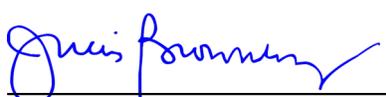

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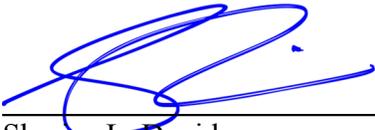
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