



June 11, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) would like to thank you for your efforts to pass a Farm Bill reauthorization in Congress this year. In particular, we appreciate your ongoing bipartisan work on the Farm Bill and Rural Development Title and applaud the many changes you have made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Rural Development programs.

Specifically, we strongly support your efforts in the bill to:

- Strengthen critical rural infrastructure and technical assistance funding for USDA's Water and Environmental Programs with priority given to rural communities facing serious water contamination issues. Also, by providing rural communities greater access and program training for USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service Programs.
- Allow for greater small water system lending to cover important pre-development costs for upgrading critical rural infrastructure.
- Establish a federal interagency taskforce to examine drinking water and surface water contamination in rural communities.
- Reaffirm the importance of the U.S. Senate confirmed position of Undersecretary of Agriculture for Rural Development within the recent USDA reorganization.
- Assist rural communities with accessing important seed capital, loans, and leveraging other rural business programs.

Additionally, your expansion of USDA's successful Water Well System Grant Program to include much-needed onsite septic repairs in rural areas will protect the health of rural residents and the environments in which they live. Many rural homes have no means of properly disposing of wastewater, such as a connection to a municipal wastewater treatment facility or an onsite treatment system like a septic tank, or are suffering from failing or unaffordable onsite treatment systems. This provision will help rural, low- to moderate-income Americans get the assistance they need to upgrade or install proper wastewater treatment services.

Finally, we support your strengthening of the Rural Utilities Service Technical Assistance and Training Program, which authorizes technical assistance and training for communities across the country, will greatly enhance the ability of small towns to invest in critical water upgrades, public health, and safety facilities that are necessary to build a prosperous rural economy. Technical assistance programs help protect taxpayer dollars by leveraging outside capital and ensuring a positive return on RD direct loans and loan guarantees. In addition, your continued support for vital rural infrastructure, like water and wastewater, increased access to reliable broadband service, and essential community facilities will help build a foundation for economic development and renewal in rural America.

We know that there is still a long road ahead for the Farm Bill process, but we stand ready and willing to assist you in pushing for adoption of the bill this year. RCAP looks forward to ongoing opportunities to work with you and your colleagues to ensure that it meets the needs of our Nation's rural communities.

We thank you for your commitment to rural America and your earnest efforts to ensure a robust rural economy through the Rural Development Title.

Sincerely,



Nathan Ohle
Executive Director
Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP)