



# Rural Community Assistance Partnership

November 28, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chair, Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Nutrition  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Nutrition  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Stabenow, and Ranking Member Boozman:

On behalf of rural communities across all 50 states, Territories, Colonias, and Tribal lands, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership writes to support the nomination, and urges swift confirmation, of Dr. Basil Gooden as Under Secretary for Rural Development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As a native of rural Virginia, Dr. Gooden possesses a deep understanding of the distinctive challenges and opportunities faced by rural communities. Throughout his career, Dr. Gooden has demonstrated unwavering commitment as a public servant and community advocate. Serving as Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture and state USDA Rural Development Director, he successfully managed federal allocations to enhance economic opportunities and made strategic investments to address persistent barriers to rural prosperity.

Dr. Gooden has explicitly expressed his appreciation for the pivotal role of agriculture and forestry in sustaining rural America, concurrently championing strategies for economic development. This commitment is of paramount importance as he assumes the role of Under Secretary, ensuring equitable opportunities for all communities. These endeavors will contribute to establishing a more robust foundation for our rural economies.

In this critical period, especially as Congress endeavors to reauthorize the Farm Bill, robust leadership at USDA Rural Development is indispensable. With the Rural Development portfolio expanding through recent federal investments, rural America merits a seasoned Under Secretary equipped with on-the-ground expertise. Dr. Gooden will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the agency maximizes its positive impact across infrastructure, housing, rural business, and renewable energy programs.

We find ourselves at a crucial juncture where rural communities are poised to address significant generational challenges. Considering this, we earnestly request the prompt confirmation of Dr. Basil Gooden to assume the role of Under Secretary for Rural Development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olga", with a small circular mark at the end.

Olga Morales Pate  
Chief Executive Officer, Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)