



**Rural Community
Assistance Partnership**

May 22, 2024

The Honorable G.T. Thompson
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on
Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee
on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office
Building

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership Incorporated (RCAP) is a national network of non-profit organizations dedicated to ensuring small, rural, and Tribal communities throughout the United States have access to essential resources, tools, and technical assistance. Our mission is to build capacity in these communities, addressing needs such as safe drinking water, sanitary wastewater systems, community led development, and other crucial aspects contributing to the prosperity of rural and Tribal areas.

RCAP deeply appreciates the progress being made to introduce and pass a Farm Bill in 2024. The draft text released by Chairman Thompson contains many key priorities for RCAP and the rural communities we serve. Additionally, we commend Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott's commitment to addressing the unique challenges facing rural communities and the bipartisan efforts to strengthen USDA Rural Development programs.

RCAP thanks the House Agriculture Committee for including the following Rural Development Title priorities in the draft text of the House Farm Bill:

- Amends the Water & Waste Disposal Technical Assistance & Training Grant Program, setting aside funding for critical technical assistance and capacity building for rural water systems and includes emergency response and recovery technical assistance as eligible under the program.
- Reauthorizes the Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program to continue supporting critical infrastructure projects in rural communities.
- Reauthorizes the Solid Waste Management Grant Program at \$10 million annually over five years and the inclusion of the Indian Tribes to the Solid Waste program (Section 6409).
- Expands eligibility and flexibility under the Rural Decentralized Water Systems Grant Program by raising income eligibility requirements and addressing extreme need while expanding a range of water treatment options for low-income rural homeowners.

- Strengthens capacity building and technical assistance for rural businesses and geographically underserved and distressed areas.
- Integrates the ReConnect Program into the Farm Bill Broadband Program and Reauthorizes the Community Connect Program at \$50 million per year for 5 years.
- The Reauthorization of the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE).

RCAP looks forward to collaborating with you and your Senate colleagues to ensure a strong bipartisan Rural Development Title is included in a final Farm Bill package. RCAP strongly supports baseline funding for a new Rural Partnerships Program, expanded national technical assistance under the Essential Rural Community Facilities Program, and mandatory funding to help clear the application backlog for rural water infrastructure projects.

We recognize the challenges ahead in the Farm Bill process and we stand ready to assist in any way possible to ensure its passage this year.

Thank you for your dedication to rural America and your efforts to pass a new Farm Bill.

Sincerely,



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