

August 5, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McCarthy, and McConnell,

As you continue to develop infrastructure legislation, the undersigned organizations welcome and applaud efforts to secure increased investment in climate-smart agricultural practices that sequester carbon or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In doing so, these practices also will lead to other benefits such as improved water quality and strengthened wildlife habitats. We strongly encourage you to ensure that these investments be focused on working lands managed by the producers who work to sustainably provide our country with a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply.

Farmers and ranchers tend with great care to their natural resources while taking a proactive approach to the long-term sustainability of their land and water. Currently, USDA conservation financial incentives and technical assistance provide producers with voluntary, incentive-based assistance to carry out multiple stewardship practices on their operations. Programs also support partnerships between farmers and conservation groups to improve natural resources in targeted areas. However, more can be done to emphasize innovative approaches that can yield meaningful environmental benefits, including manure and feed management or carbon benefits in the case of soil health. We also know that effective programs that support climate smart agriculture are highly oversubscribed.

We support efforts to increase spending on conservation incentives, including strong technical and financial assistance, as part of upcoming infrastructure-related legislation. This would provide an important opening to strengthen and advance the focus on those innovative practices and approaches that can help farmers to continue and enhance the work they have already done to reduce their environmental footprint. These approaches also result in benefits to our nation's infrastructure, improving water quality and reducing sediment in our waterways. Producers of all

sizes, all commodities, and in all regions of the country are eager to partner with you on this unique stewardship opportunity, especially given that current programs are oversubscribed.

We support a significant increase rural broadband investment in this legislation. Broadband is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity for agriculture, education, healthcare, and economic development in rural communities. The internet plays a significant role in countless aspects of our daily lives, and decisions are being made today for a future that will require access to high-speed internet. To ensure that all Americans have access to this quickly developing future, it is critical for this legislation to increase funding for USDA programs that would expand rural broadband access and infrastructure.

Finally, our organizations also wish to reiterate the significant concerns we have voiced regarding multiple tax policies that have been put forth as potential offsets for infrastructure legislation. Specifically, we urge Congress not to alter or eliminate long-standing provisions that support future new and multi-generational family farms. As discussions on offsets continue, it is critical to avoid an approach that would undermine the future of farming in the United States.

In closing, our organizations look forward to continuing to work with you on infrastructure legislation. We are enthusiastic for the unique opportunity to help farmers and ranchers augment their ongoing environmental stewardship and sustainability efforts.

Sincerely,

National Milk Producers Federation
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
Agricultural Retailers Association
American Seed Trade Association
CropLife America
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Farmers Union
National Potato Council
Produce Marketing Association
U.S. Apple Association