

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 2022

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Hoeven:

As your subcommittee considers its fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations bill, we write to request that you provide robust funding for the Research Facilities Act (RFA) as amended and reauthorized by section 7503 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334).

The RFA establishes a competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to help address the escalating maintenance needs of decaying infrastructure at U.S. schools of agriculture. These grants, available to land-grant universities and non-land-grant colleges of agriculture, would go towards facility construction, alteration, acquisition, modernization, renovation, or remodeling. Despite Congress's acknowledgement of this need by providing authorization for these grants in 2018, funding has not yet been appropriated.

A 2015 study sounded the alarm on this issue, reporting an estimated \$8.4 billion in deferred maintenance at U.S. schools of agriculture. It noted that no region of the U.S. was consistently providing sufficient resources to address the deferred maintenance backlog and that if investment in maintenance were to continue at or below 2015 levels then deferred maintenance costs would continue to skyrocket over the next decade. A 2020 report confirmed just that—finding that 69 percent of facilities at U.S. schools of agriculture were at the end of their useful lives, with the cost of performing deferred maintenance ballooning to \$11.5 billion, or 137 percent the 2015 cost estimate.

It is imperative that the research infrastructure at U.S. schools of agriculture, much of which was built in the 1950s and 1960s, is maintained and modernized to allow not only for the cutting-edge research that is required to maintain the U.S. as a global leader in agriculture, but also for these institutions to attract and retain our next generation of agricultural professionals. Many of these schools are aligned with Cooperative Extension, which provides farmers and community members with science-based information to solve myriad present-day challenges to increase agricultural production, profitability, and sustainability in the face of ever-evolving outside variables like changing rainfall patterns and increased pest and disease pressures.

For these reasons and more, there is a strong federal interest in maintaining these facilities that are home to billions of dollars of research funded by USDA. We ask that in your FY 2023 appropriations bill you address this critical need by providing robust funding for the RFA. Funding for this competitive grant program will allow USDA to begin the process of addressing the escalating maintenance needs of decaying infrastructure at U.S. schools of agriculture.

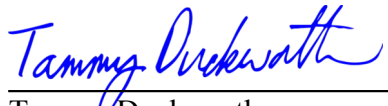
Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



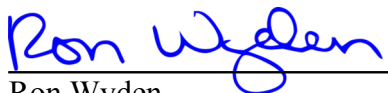
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



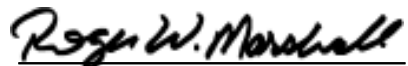
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



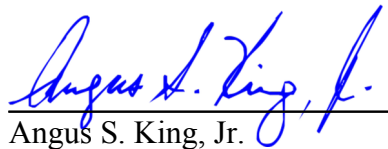
Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



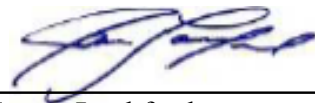
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



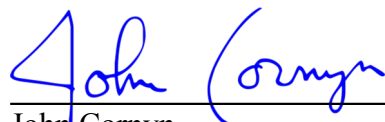
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



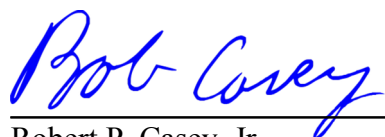
Debbie Stabenow
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Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



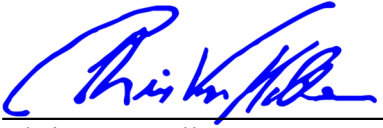
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator