

September 3, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chair  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott  
Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn Thompson  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Thompson,

As your committees proceed with drafting legislation consistent with the instructions of the recently passed budget resolution, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) writes in support of at least \$11.5 billion investment in agricultural facilities at capacity eligible institutions, including 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions, and non-land grant colleges of agriculture via the [Research Facilities Act](#) (RFA) through the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

For every \$1 invested, U.S. public food and agriculture R&D spending has returned \$17, on average, to the American economy.<sup>1</sup> This agricultural research innovation network is complimented by the Cooperative Extension System, which keeps farmers in business and transfers important agricultural and food information to people, businesses and communities.<sup>2</sup> Despite this incredible return on investment, the United States' share of global agricultural R&D has decreased significantly in the last half-century, going from 20 percent to 8.9 percent.<sup>3</sup> In tandem, support for agricultural research facilities at U.S. colleges of agriculture has diminished—the last significant investment was in the late 1990's. In March this year, a report indicated that sixty-nine percent of the buildings at U.S. colleges and schools of agriculture are at the end of their useful life.<sup>4</sup> The report estimated the deferred maintenance backlog at colleges of agriculture to be least \$11.5 billion, with a total replacement cost of \$38.1 billion.

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<sup>1</sup> Baldos, Uris Lantz, Frederi G. Viens, Thomas W. Hertel, and Keith O. Fuglie. R&D Spending, Knowledge Capital, and Agricultural Productivity Growth: A Bayesian Approach. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. July 2018. 101(1): 291–310; <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajae/aay039>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://pennstate.pure.elsevier.com/en/publications/state-level-cooperative-extension-spending-and-farmer-exits>

<sup>3</sup> [The Drivers of U.S. Agricultural Productivity Growth By Philip G. Pardey and Julian M. Alston](#)

<sup>4</sup> Gordian, 2021. A National Study of Capital Infrastructure at Colleges and Schools of Agriculture <https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/News/new-study-sounds-alarm-about-agriculture-school-infrastructure>

Agricultural research facilities at public colleges of agriculture (NIFA capacity eligible institutions) are essential for the United States' global agricultural and food research preeminence. The nation's colleges of agriculture are key implementers of climate research and innovation because of the connection to local stakeholders. Yet, scientists cannot perform optimally in facilities from the 1950s and 1960s. APLU requests support for facilities repair, maintenance, and building through the Research Facilities Act for all 1862, 1890, and 1994 land-grant institutions and non-land-grant colleges of agriculture to address this severe and growing problem.

Modern agriculture research facilities will allow for robust and needed research on climate change, food safety, zoonotic disease preparedness, biosecurity, biobased packaging, and advanced market analysis. State-of-the-art facilities will also allow the agricultural, food, and biobased sciences to recruit a diversity of talent, add jobs to the economy, and enhance the U.S.' ability to compete with international rivals.

APLU appreciates your consideration of our request and continued support for America's colleges of agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter McPherson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "M".

Peter McPherson  
President,  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)