



October 24, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Shaheen, Chairman Bishop, and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

As president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I write to thank you for your ongoing work on the FY2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill and urge support for APLU's priorities as you reconcile differences between House and Senate measures.

I further note how crucial it is for Congress to complete the appropriations process. Additional continuing resolutions will fail to capitalize on Congress' meaningful work in addressing budget caps while ceding the opportunity to make important increases to key investments in scientific research. Understanding that the House marked up their bills under a higher total funding level than what was passed through the bipartisan budget agreement in July, APLU respectfully urges that the strongest possible funding levels for important research programs prevail in the final bill.

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. Annually, APLU's 197 U.S. member campuses enroll 4.1 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.1 million degrees, employ 1.1 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$42.4 billion in university-based research.

Our nation's public universities provide essential research, education, and extension services that address urgent local, regional, national, and global problems. While both public and private funds help support research, development, and outreach in this sector, USDA's **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** is the most significant source of funding.

As you work to reconcile differences between the House and Senate measures, we respectfully submit below our funding requests. Additionally, we also urge Congress to include the House bill language which would allow USDA to waive matching funds required for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative grant awardees.

Program	APLU Funding Request
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)	\$460 million
Hatch Act	\$292 million
Smith-Lever Funds	\$359 million
Evans-Allen Program	\$67 million
1890 Institutions Extension Services	\$57 million
McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry	\$41 million

The **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**, America's agricultural competitive grants program, advances fundamental new science and supports education and extension programs that deliver science-based knowledge to communities, allowing individuals to make informed practical decisions. Research conducted through AFRI has real-world impacts for local farmers and economies.

We thank the House and Senate for recognizing the importance of this program and offering increased appropriations for FY2020. We respectfully request that members agree to at least the House's level of **\$460 million for AFRI**. In FY2018 alone, NIFA received approximately 2,707 proposals for AFRI grants, and awarded just 686 awards. As other nations increase investments in agriculture R&D, production, and sustainability, we must build on our investments or risk losing our nation's significant competitive edge. These investments are also essential to improving health and well-being.

We respectfully request that members appropriate **\$292 million for the Hatch Act**. Through the Hatch Act, funds provide support for State Agricultural Experiment Stations, enabling them to address critical national, multistate, state, and local problems. Experiment Stations are linked to and maintained by states and land-grant universities and include research on all aspects of agriculture.

We urge that members include in the final bill **\$359 million for Smith-Lever Funds**. This important program provides capacity funding for delivery of Cooperative Extension's wide array of programs which benefit the nation. Cooperative Extension operates through our nation's land-grant universities in partnership with federal, state, and local governments. Leaders and volunteers address public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families.

We also urge members to allocate **\$67 million for the Evans-Allen Program** which provides capacity funding to support agricultural research at the 1890 land-grant institutions, and **\$57 million for 1890 Institutions Extension Services**. The 1890 land-grant institutions are historically black universities that were established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890 and currently consist of 19 universities around the country. These programs are crucial to

strengthening and maintaining capacity at these universities for agricultural research, teaching, and extension efforts.

APLU respectfully requests that members allocate **\$41 million for the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program**. This grant assists all states in carrying out programs for forestry research at state forestry schools and colleges in areas such as reforestation and protection of forest lands from natural disasters and pests. In doing so, the programs ensure a trained pool of forest scientists capable of conducting needed research that safeguards our food sources and boosts economies through innovative uses of wood and other forest products.

Lastly, the **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)** is vital to addressing the needs of the specialty crop industry, which includes thousands of local, small-scale farmers, through research and extension activities. Unfortunately, the matching requirement of one-to-one recently passed in the 2018 Farm Bill makes this federally funded grant program inaccessible to many, especially local farmers across the country. We appreciate the House's bill language which would allow USDA to waive the matching funds requirement for SCRI grant awardees. We request a final measure include the House's SCRI language.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests regarding the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Please consider APLU as a resource as you work to finalize FY2020 funding.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson
President, APLU

cc:

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby
House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Kay Granger
Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies