

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

January 18, 2022

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to you today in response to the recent announcement from the Biden Administration regarding their plan to increase competition in the meat and poultry supply chain. We appreciate that the administration is finally acknowledging the rising price of meat for consumers and the need for more competition in the meat packing industry.

We agree on the importance of expanding independent processing capacity. This is a step that is critical to lowering meat prices for families and helping small businesses thrive. While the Administration's proposed, \$1 billion plan looks nice on its face, it is only a short-term fix. As soon as the money from this plan dries up, we will be back to square one with small producers struggling to keep up with large producers. A long-term solution is necessary to give these small and independent processors the certainty they need to operate their businesses long after this grant funding is no longer available.

As you know, the USDA inspection process is an integral part of this industry. Federal inspectors must be present at all times during the slaughter operations and for at least part of the shift where meat products are processed. For small and independent processors to thrive, USDA must increase the number of meat inspectors available. This can be achieved through the direct hiring of more USDA inspectors or through cooperative agreements with state inspection programs.

There are currently many vacancies for federal meat inspectors and numerous comments from the [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) mention the need for more inspectors. Even if small meat processors receive grants to expand their facilities, they will not be able to help the supply chain if they do not have access to inspectors to inspect their product and get it to market.

We all can agree that food safety is of the utmost importance to both producers and consumers. If small and independent processors want to make headway into the market, they need access to more inspectors so they can quickly and safely get their products to market. With the announced plan, how will the Administration address the need for more meat inspectors? The small and independent processors in our districts and across the country deserve certainty.

We ask that you please address these concerns by February 15, 2022 and we look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



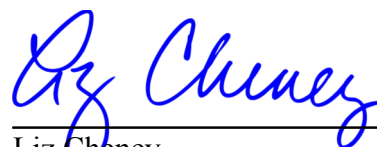
Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Mike Bost
Member of Congress



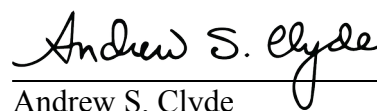
Madison Cawthorn
Member of Congress



Liz Cheney
Member of Congress



Ben Cline
Member of Congress



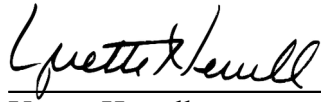
Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress



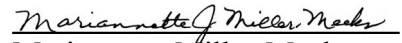
C. Scott Franklin
Member of Congress



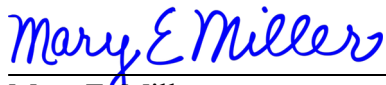
Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks,
M.D.
Member of Congress



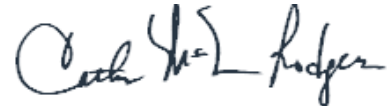
Mary E. Miller
Member of Congress



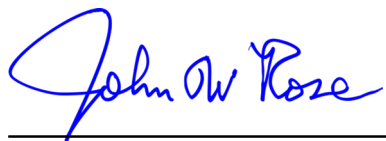
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



John Rose
Member of Congress



Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



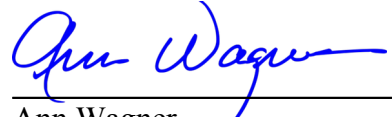
Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Chris Stewart
Member of Congress



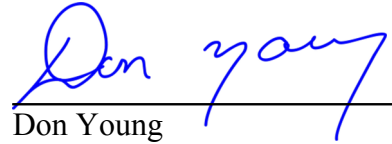
David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress