

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reviews applications for the fourth round of the Farmers to Families Food Box Program, we write to request that you ensure Maine can equitably benefit from this program extension.

In the first round of the Farmers to Families program announced in April, no Maine-based contractors were selected and the coverage of the program was extremely limited within the state. Consequently, there was a significant missed opportunity for USDA to benefit Maine's farmers, food insecure families, and small businesses at a time when they were struggling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate that you worked to address the concerns raised in our letters dated May 29 and June 18 and ultimately included two Maine-based contractors in the second round of awards. However, we were disappointed that once again no companies in Maine were chosen to supply the third round announced in September. While non-profit partners have received a substantial supply of food boxes from an out-of-state distributor, helping to alleviate hunger among Maine families, the economic impact of the program for farmers and businesses in Maine has been more limited as significant federal support flows to other states.

Maine deserves another chance to benefit from this program. The extension of the Farmers to Families program announced on October 23rd offers an opportunity for USDA to rectify the shortcomings of the program to date and to increase its positive impact in our state. We look forward to working with you to ensure that Maine families, farmers, and businesses are able to fully benefit from the Farmers to Families Food Box Program.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress