

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2025

Mr. Gary Washington  
Acting Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Acting Secretary Washington,

We're writing in response to recent communications from the United States Department of Agriculture to grant recipients informing them that their funding disbursements have been frozen. We are deeply alarmed by the unexpected, unprecedented halt in funding for grants that have already been awarded.

Starting on January 22, 2025, we first heard from individuals who received USDA outreach about a moratorium on disbursing funding. This outreach came a week before the unconstitutional Office of Management and Budget memo halting the disbursement of all federal funding. This memo has since been rescinded and is being challenged in the courts. The funding that has been halted includes USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program funded through annual appropriations, the Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities program funded through Section 5 of the Commodity Credit Corporation, and Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) funded through annual appropriations. These programs support farmers and rural communities and clearly fall outside of President Trump's Executive Order, "Unleashing American Energy", immediately pausing disbursements of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding.

We request USDA provide the rationale and legal justification for halting funding for these programs. Furthermore, we request a list of any and all other programs for which USDA has frozen funding, and the justification for doing so.

To be clear, the people impacted by this funding freeze are hardworking, rural Americans and small businesses. These grant recipients operate on thin margins and were relying on these funds to continue critical research, operate their business, and support farmers. Pulling the rug out from these recipients runs counter to the mission of the USDA and will quickly and significantly cripple economic development in rural America, with a ripple effect that hurts businesses and jobs that indirectly benefit from federal investment. Reneging on USDA's funding commitments and arbitrarily stopping grant funding without consideration of the impacts to the hardworking American citizens is reckless.

We request a written response from USDA by Friday, February 14, 2025.

Sincerely,



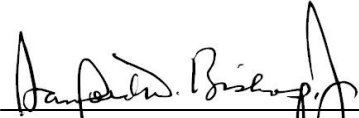
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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Angie Craig  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture



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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Ranking Member, House  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies