



April 18, 2018

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

On behalf of the nation's cities and regional councils, we applaud your hard work in drafting the *Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018* (H.R. 2), also known as the Farm Bill. This wide-ranging and critical legislation establishes federal farm, food, and rural policy that will have a tremendous impact on our rural communities, farming livelihoods, and food economies, which in turn will affect the environment, local and regional economic growth, and public health.

Today, our rural communities are facing many obstacles, including increasing health disparities, the opioid epidemic, a growing digital divide, an agriculture recession, the adverse effects of extreme weather events, and a nationwide shift of focus away from the manufacturing and coal mining jobs they once relied on. We are discouraged by the elimination of mandatory funding for the Rural Development Title's most critical programs, which is needed now more than ever. **As you mark up the draft of the Farm Bill in committee, we encourage you to support a robust, comprehensive bill that can help our rural communities overcome their most difficult challenges.**

The next Farm Bill should provide critical investments to support infrastructure, economic development, nutrition, and conservation in our country's most underserved areas. Additionally, it should reauthorize existing programs at full funding or create new programs that focus on the following priorities:

- Building and maintaining all types of infrastructure systems, including transportation, water and wastewater, and broadband;
- Giving the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture the authority to prioritize projects that help rural communities meet the challenges of the opioid crisis;
- Supporting struggling individuals and families through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other important nutrition assistance programs;
- Reinforcing the current SNAP entitlement program and funding structure, avoiding additional financial strain on both recipients and local governments;
- Promoting food equity and healthy food access through the development of strong local and regional food systems;

- Incentivizing conservation programs to promote cleaner water, soil, air, and proper wastewater disposal at the local and regional level;
- Improving energy independence and efficiency;
- Strengthening local and regional economic development initiatives to promote jobs and economic growth; and
- Offering resources and technical assistance to homegrown small businesses, agricultural entrepreneurs, farmers, and ranchers to help them succeed.

We appreciate your continued leadership and support on ensuring the next Farm Bill will support the strength and stability of our communities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff: Carolyn Berndt (NLC) at [berndt@nlc.org](mailto:berndt@nlc.org) or 202-626-3101; Maci Hurley (NARC) at [maci.hurley@narc.org](mailto:maci.hurley@narc.org) or 202-618-5691.

Sincerely,



Clarence E. Anthony  
CEO and Executive Director  
National League of Cities



Leslie Wollack  
Executive Director  
National Association of Regional Councils

cc: Member of the House Committee on Agriculture