

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

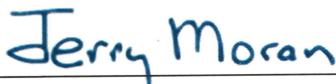
Small meatpackers play a critical role in maintaining the U.S. food supply, as well as provide important markets for livestock producers and increase consumer access and options for locally sourced food. However, even as the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to disrupt the nation's meat supply by causing large meatpacking facilities to pause or slow operations, U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) overtime inspection fees discouraged small meatpackers from processing livestock more than 40 hours per week.

In the 116th Congress, we introduced legislation to address this challenge by reducing USDA-FSIS overtime and holiday inspection fees for the more 5,200 very small and small federally-inspected establishments across the country. We also successfully worked to secure funding for this purpose in COVID-19 relief legislation. As you implement the recently passed *American Rescue Plan*, we write to urge you to prioritize reducing USDA-FSIS overtime fees based off the provisions included in our legislation, the *Small Packer Overtime and Holiday Fee Relief for COVID-19 Act of 2020*.

Our legislation directs USDA-FSIS to reduce the fees charged to very small establishments by at least 75 percent and to small establishments by at least 30 percent. These changes will help build greater resilience in the nation's food supply chain by addressing the economic disincentive currently in place for small meatpackers to work longer hours. Further, it will help level the playing field between very small and small establishments versus large establishments capable of operating two full operating shifts and therefore able to avoid these inspection fees. Consumers will also benefit from greater access and more options for locally sourced meat products provided by small meatpackers. Finally, the increased slaughter and meat processing capacity resulting from implementing the provisions of our legislation will give livestock producers more options to market their animals.

We look forward to working with you to support small meatpackers. By quickly implementing the provisions in our legislation, you can provide immediate relief to these facilities working to keep food on American's tables. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress