

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 7, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write regarding the planned relocation of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) core personnel and functions out of the National Capital Region. The ability of USDA to fulfill its mission is critical not only to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, but also to ensuring the safety of our food and natural resources. Given the Department's lack of consultation with Congress to date regarding this reorganization plan, we are deeply concerned that this relocation, like many other reorganization efforts attempted by this administration, is being implemented without appropriate study of the costs and benefits to USDA or the American people.¹ To assist Congress in its oversight function during the statutorily required 30-day consultation period, we look forward to your providing additional information regarding what analysis USDA has conducted to ensure this plan is in the best interest of USDA, the rural communities it serves, and the American taxpayer.²

The Administration's cuts to USDA's workforce and upheaval caused by relocating offices and functions to other parts of the country could reduce USDA's capacity to provide essential services and perform the research critical to the maintenance and safety of America's agricultural sector.³ This is precisely what happened in 2019, when President Trump directed USDA to relocate two agencies from Washington, DC to Kansas City, Missouri.⁴ As the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found in 2022, USDA failed to consider critical costs

¹ See, for example, 'It's a Shambles': DOGE Cuts Bring Chaos, Long Waits at Social Security for Seniors, Los Angeles Times (Apr. 9, 2025) (online at www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2025-04-09/trump-doge-social-security-cuts-seniors); *100 Days of DOGE: Lots of Chaos, Not So Much Efficiency*, Reuters (Apr. 24, 2025) (online at www.reuters.com/world/us/100-days-doge-lots-chaos-not-so-much-efficiency-2025-04-24/); and *Trump's Plan to Begin 'Phasing Out' FEMA After Hurricane Season Burdens States, Experts Warn*, Associated Press (June 11, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/fema-hurricane-season-trump-eliminate-statefunding-25fb7714414e17fa51156be7e91a4474>).

² Pub. L. No. 118-42 § 716 provides that none of the funds made available through appropriation or through collection of fees for agricultural and related programs are available for activities including relocation or reorganization of offices and/or employees without written Congressional notification at least 30 days in advance.

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan*, SM 1078-015 (July 24, 2025) (online at www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/sm-1078-015.pdf) and U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Secretary Rollins Announces USDA Reorganization, Restoring the Department's Core Mission of Supporting American Agriculture* (July 24, 2025) (online at www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/07/24/secretary-rollins-announces-usda-reorganization-restoring-departments-core-mission-supporting).

⁴ *Trump Relocates Two USDA Agencies to Kansas City*, Associated Press (Oct. 1, 2019, 10:00 AM).

and economic effects in its analysis of the costs and benefits of moving agencies from Washington, DC. GAO also found that the offices that were relocated had reduced productivity and USDA was left with a less experienced workforce. GAO found that it took USDA two years to recover from the upheaval caused by the move.⁵

Our nation's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities cannot afford to wait years for critical services from USDA, nor can they afford a degradation of USDA expertise. According to agricultural industry reporting, stakeholders are concerned about a range of negative effects of the reorganization, including a loss of institutional knowledge and capacity resulting in service disruptions to farmers.⁶

Without rigorous analysis, stakeholder consultation, and planning, any large-scale relocation of USDA could leave the agency without the personnel, expertise, and resources needed to effectively serve agricultural and rural communities. The Administration's actions prior to the announcement of this planned relocation have already significantly hindered USDA's ability to carry out its missions. For example, USDA has left critical specialist roles vacant, resulting in diminished capacity, including a 20% reduction in staffing at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).⁷ As stakeholders recently testified, NRCS plays a crucial role in assisting farmers and ranchers in proactively managing their land, and NRCS programs are frequently oversubscribed, with demand outpacing funding and staff capacity.⁸ As a result of the Trump Administration's treatment of the federal workforce, NRCS has lost nearly 2,400 employees since January, resulting in higher workloads for staff and reduced capacity to process program applications from farmers and other producers.⁹

⁴ See National Farmers Union, *NFU Urges Congress to Halt Relocation, Reorganization of Research Agencies* (May 16, 2019) (online at <https://nfu.org/2019/05/16/nfu-urges-congress-to-halt-relocation-reorganization-of-research-agencies/>).

⁵ Government Accountability Office, *Agency Relocations: Following Leading Practices Will Better Position USDA to Mitigate the Ongoing Impacts on Its Workforce*, GAO-23-104709 (Dec. 14, 2022) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-104709.pdf) and Government Accountability Office, *Evidence-Based Policy Making: USDA's Decision to Relocate Research Agencies to Kansas City Was Not Fully Consistent with an Evidence-Based Approach*, GAO-22-104540 (Apr. 19, 2022) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104540.pdf).

⁶ See, for example, *USDA Reorganization Sparks Concerns*, Progressive Farmer (July 28, 2025) (online at www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/livestock/article/2025/07/25/trumps-usda-reorganization-plan); and *USDA Reorganization Raises Questions for Agriculture and for the Seed Sector*, SeedWorld (July 29, 2025) (online at www.seedworld.com/us/2025/07/29/usda-reorganization-raises-questions-for-agriculture-and-for-the-seed-sector/).

⁷ *USDA Asks Employees to Transfer to 'Critical' Vacancies, Suggests More Cuts Coming*, Government Executive (July 16, 2025) (online at www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/usda-asks-employees-transfer-critical-vacancies-suggests-more-cuts-coming/406763/).

⁸ Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology, Testimony of Mr. Russell Boening, President, Texas Farm Bureau Federation, Testimony of Mr. Tom Fink, Policy Director, American Farmland Trust, Testimony of Ms. Nicole Galase, Managing Director, Hawaii Cattlemen's Association, and Testimony of Dr. Dan Sebert, Senior advisor and Former Executive Director, National Watersheds Coalition, *Hearing on Supporting Farmers, Strengthening Conservation, Sustaining Working Lands* (June 5, 2025) (online at <https://agriculture.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=7920>).

⁹ *USDA Asks Employees to Transfer to 'Critical' Vacancies, Suggests More Cuts Coming*, Government Executive (July 16, 2025) (online at www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/usda-asks-employees-transfer-critical-vacancies-suggests-more-cuts-coming/406763/).

Although we appreciate Deputy Secretary Vaden's appearance before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee on July 30, 2025, to testify on the reorganization plan, his testimony leaves significant areas of concern about USDA's level of analysis or lack thereof into the impacts of the plan.¹⁰ At multiple points in the hearing, Deputy Secretary Vaden testified that USDA has no estimate of what the staff attrition rate will be from this plan, stating, "it's hard for me to predict how many will [relocate]" and that "we don't have a specific number to offer [on estimated employee attrition] at this time." Given the results of USDA's prior relocation efforts, USDA has clearly failed to learn the lessons it should have from the disastrous 2019 reorganization. Our nation cannot afford another rushed relocation.

Given USDA's critical role in supporting our food system and agricultural industries, it is urgent that Congress understand not only the details of USDA's planned reorganization but also the goals and analysis underpinning those plans. To assist Congress in its oversight, we request that USDA provide the following information and documents no later than August 21, 2025:

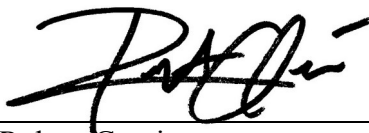
1. A timeline and all documents and communications related to all employee engagement efforts regarding the proposed reorganization and relocation and resulting analysis;
2. A timeline and all documents and communications related to all stakeholder engagement efforts regarding the proposed reorganization and relocation and resulting analysis;
3. All documents and communications related to any benefit-cost analysis and any other analyses conducted in support of USDA reorganization plans, including:
 - a. The goals, anticipated outcomes, and improvements that will result from the reorganization and planned metrics for determining whether the improvements are achieved;
 - b. Workforce planning analysis, including identification of critical skill gaps and forecast of future needs;
 - c. Comprehensive analysis of relocation and reorganization costs, including employee and office/equipment relocation expenses, leasing costs, productivity loss, travel costs, and costs to stakeholders;
4. All documents and communications related to USDA's reorganization plans, to include:

¹⁰ Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry, *Hearing on Review of the USDA Reorganization Proposal* (July 30, 2025) (online at www.agriculture.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-usda-reorganization-proposal).

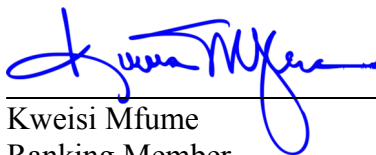
- a. USDA's Agency Reduction-in-force and Reorganization Plan responsive to the Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management memo of February 26, 2025¹¹;
- b. Implementation timeline identifying milestones and the persons accountable for meeting such milestones;
- c. A detailed breakdown of the budgetary resources needed to implement the reorganization and alignment of those costs with appropriated resources;
- d. A detailed description of functions and offices proposed for elimination or reduction;
- e. Assessment of risks related to reorganization and risk mitigation plan; and
- f. Documentation of succession, transition, and recruiting plans to ensure maintenance of core functions.

The Virginia and Maryland congressional delegations represent thousands of USDA employees. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

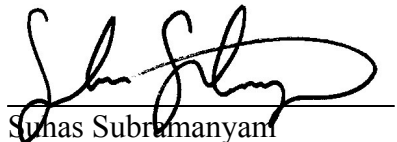
Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



Kweisi Mfume
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Government Reform,
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



Sumas Subramanyam
Member of Congress

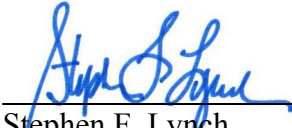
¹¹ Memorandum from Russell T. Vought, Director, Office of Management and Budget and Charles Ezell, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (Feb. 26, 2025) (online at www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/latest-memos/guidance-on-agency-rif-and-reorganization-plans-requested-by-implementing-the-president-s-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative.pdf)



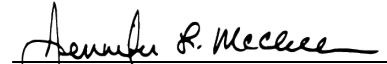
Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



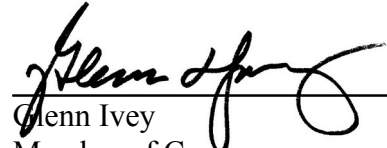
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins

Page 6

The Honorable Pete Sessions, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations, Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform