

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 24, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to you today to underscore our concerns with comments you made at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI on October 1, where you stated that in regard to dairy farms, “the big get bigger and the small go out.” As representatives from New England, where family dairy farms are an important piece of our culture, history, and economy; we believe that the USDA has a duty to support all dairy farms, not just the factory farms that do not fit in the landscape of our region.

New Englanders have been milking cows since the 1600s. Incredibly, there are dairy farmers in the region still operating on land originally deeded to their families by King George II. Sadly, we have seen our dairy farms decline by over twenty percent in New England since 2002—a particularly troubling statistic given how conscientious our family farmers are when it comes to manure management, water stewardship, and energy usage. According to American Farmland Trust, our nation lost over one million acres of farmland in the past year. In population-dense regions like New England—where the average population per square mile is 235, versus an average of 94 in the contiguous United States—lost farmland is seldom recovered.

The volatility of the dairy market over the past decade has made us keenly aware of the importance for stability among New England dairies. We also understand that USDA investment has a profound impact on our family dairies and, in many cases, is the primary reason that the farms are thriving. From Farm Service Agency supports to the Rural Energy for America Program, the federal government has played a key role in helping our farms become more fiscally and environmentally efficient. However, what our farmers see in action from the USDA is not reflected in your sentiments about the future of small family dairy farming. While Congress is responsible for establishing many of the supports for farmers, you should seek to lift up all farms through your comments and actions—not just the large factory farms.

Throughout your time as Secretary, you have visited our states and districts, and spent time with New England family dairy farmers. We hope that the comments you made related to small dairy

farms do not reflect your personal commitment or the commitment of the USDA to continue to support our farming community. With that, we invite you back to New England whenever your schedule permits so you may learn more about our rich dairy farming history.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



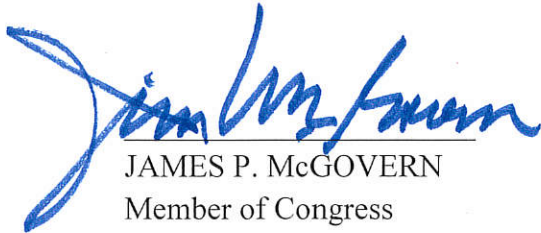
PETER WELCH  
Member of Congress



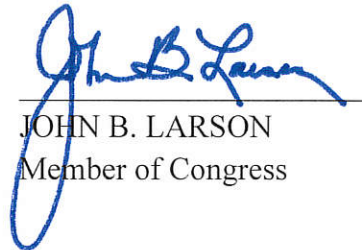
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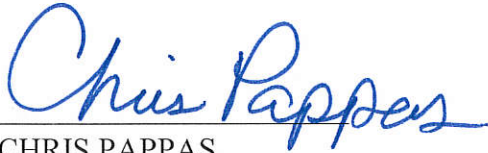
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