

March 29, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, &
Forestry
United States Senate
Washington D.C.

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, &
Forestry
United States Senate
Washington D.C.

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C.

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C.

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott:

We, the 131 undersigned organizations, request your support in enacting meaningful reforms to our nation's checkoff programs. Checkoff programs are mandatory participation programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, many of which have been directly established by Congress. These programs are funded through compulsory fees on producers of milk, eggs, beef, pork, and many other commodities.

Several of these programs and associated boards have well-documented histories of waste, conflicts of interest, misuse of funding, anti-competitive behavior, and other related issues. For these reasons, farmers and ranchers across the country have grown disillusioned with the effectiveness of many of these checkoff programs as they operate today.

Programs entrusted with the hard-earned dollars of America's family farmers and ranchers should maintain the highest levels of integrity and transparency. The Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act (S.557 and H.R.1249) is critical to restoring a minimum level of oversight. This legislation would create appropriate safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest, give producers clarity about how their money is spent, and reduce opportunity for abuse through regular audits.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Prohibit checkoff programs from contracting with any organization that lobbies on agricultural policy.
- Prohibit employees and agents of the checkoff boards from engaging in activities that may involve a conflict of interest.
- Establish uniform standards for checkoff programs that prohibit anti-competitive activity, unfair or deceptive acts, or any act or practice that may be disparaging to another agricultural commodity or product.
- Require transparency through the publication of checkoff program budgets and expenditures.
- Require periodic audits of compliance with the Act by the USDA Inspector General.

As you draft the 2023 Farm Bill, we urge you to include the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act (S.557 and H.R.1249) as an essential reform to provide transparency and accountability in commodity checkoff programs.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle

Alabama State Association of Cooperatives

Alfred Geis Charitable Fund

American Agriculture Movement

American Economic Liberties Project

American Grassfed Association

American Indian Mothers Inc.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

American Sustainable Business Network

Animals Are Sentient Beings Inc.

Appetite For Change, Inc.

Attorneys for Animals, Inc.

Black Emergency Managers Association International

Blacks in Law Enforcement of America

Bronx Climate Justice North

Buckeye Quality Beef Association

Bucks Environmental Action

Callicrate Cattle Co.

Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment

Catskill Mountain Keeper

Center for Food Safety

Chicago Food Policy Action Council

Clean Elections Texas

Climate Communications Coalition

Climate Crisis Policy

Climate Refarm

Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias

CWA Local 1081

Dakota Rural Action

Environmental Working Group

Factory Farming Awareness Coalition

Fair Start Movement

Faiths for Safe Water

Family Farm Defenders

Farm Action Fund

Farm Aid

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farm Forward
Farm Sanctuary
Food & Water Watch
Food Integrity Campaign
Food In Neighborhoods Community Coalition
Food System Innovations
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of the Earth
Government Information Watch
HEAL Food Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
Indiana Farmers Union
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Iowa Farmers Union
Iowa Stock Growers Association
Jewish Initiative for Animals
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kansas Black Farmers Association
Kansas Cattlemen's Association
Kiss the Ground
Land Stewardship Project
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.
Local Matters
Mercy for Animals
Michigan Farmers Union
Missouri Farmers Union
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Montana Cattlemen's Association
Montana Farmers Union
National Dairy Producers Organization NDPO
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Taxpayers Union
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
Naturepedic Organic Mattresses
Nebraska Farmers Union
Nebraska State Grange

Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
NESAWG Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
New England Farmers Union
Northeast Organic Dairy Farmers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association - Interstate Council
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NH (NOFA-NH)
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ (NOFA-NJ)
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY (NOFA-NY)
Northern Plains Resource Council
Northwest Environmental Advocates
NY4Whales
Oglala Sioux Livestock & Landowners Association
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Farmers Union
Oklahoma Farmers Union
Open Markets Institute
Operation Spring Plant Inc
Organic Seed Alliance
P Street
Progress Michigan
Public Citizen
Public Justice Food Project
R-CALF USA
Revolving Door Project
Rhode Island Food Policy Council
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA
Rural Advancement Fund of the National Sharecroppers, Inc.
Rural Coalition
RuralOrganizing.org
Slow Food Houston
Slow Food Sonoma County North
Slow Food USA
Slow Food UW
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project
Soul Fire Farm
South Dakota Farmers Union
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
Southern Colorado Livestock Association
Stevens County Cattlemen's Association
Strategies for Ethical and Environmental Development (SEED)
TAPPPS Group (Texas Animal Protein Producers Prosperity and Security) Group
Texas Farmers Union
The Earth Bill Network
The Organization For Competitive Markets

Union of Concerned Scientists

WANDA: Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture

WESPAC Foundation, Inc.

Western Organization of Resource Councils

Wisconsin Farmers Union

Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN)

World Farmers