

Good Morning Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway and thank you for holding this hearing today.

Today I stand to speak of the importance of my bill, HR 4482, the Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019. This bill will provide CBP the authorization to hire Agricultural Specialists and Technicians to fill the deficit that their own Resource Application Model has determined is necessary to carry out inspections, as well as authorization to add canine teams for these inspections. Currently, according to CBP's Resource Allocation Model, there is a deficit of 695 Agricultural Specialists and this bill will authorize the hiring of up to 240 specialists a year until CBP meets its workforce targets.

On an average day, CBP processes more than one million passengers and pedestrians; 358,000 incoming international air passengers; 81,000 truck, rail, and seas containers; 90,000 shipments of goods approved for entry; and \$120 million in fees, duties, and tariffs at U.S. ports of entries by land, sea, and air. On these days, they seize more than 2,112 kilograms of drugs; 100 shipments; 4,370 prohibited plant materials and/or animal products; and 319 agricultural pests and diseases.

Agricultural Specialists and Technicians are the frontline for preventing the entry of these illicit and invasive species. These pests and diseases cause an estimated \$120 billion in economic damage to the US, with more than half of that figure accounting for damages to the agricultural sector.

With the rising transmission of African Swine Fever across Asia and Eastern Europe, the protection of our domestic swine herds is imperative, and the expansion of our domestic surveillance at ports of entry is critical to protecting our hard-working pork producers. With estimated losses of over 300 million pigs in China due to African Swine Fever, increasing detection and eradication of products contaminated with African Swine Fever is imperative to prevent the devastation of our domestic hog herds.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to protect our domestic agricultural economy from the entrance of illegal agricultural products. We need to be proactive instead of reactive in defending our agricultural production, and this bill is a critical first step to protecting our nation's food and agriculture.