

Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. I am here to advocate on behalf of our nation's farmers, ranchers, foresters and the programs that ensure the continued prosperity of rural America.

Most importantly, and as Chairman Bishop knows all too well, the Southeastern agriculture economy was absolutely devastated by natural disasters last year. Hurricanes caused billions of dollars in damage including \$1.5 Billion in Florida alone. While I remain hopeful that Congress will pass a supplemental appropriation for FY19 as soon as this week, these disasters illustrate the critical importance of the farm safety net. We must ensure adequate funding to allow our producers the certainty that when future disasters occur, the federal government has programs in place to keep them going until more help arrives. Unfortunately, due a longer growing cycle, timber producers many times do not have access to these critical programs as other farmers do. I look forward to working with this committee as well as my colleagues on the House Agriculture committee to correct this going forward.

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I would also like to urge the committee to continue to prioritize important agricultural research programs like the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and the land-grant research and extension capacity programs. In addition, the 2018 Farm Bill established the framework for investment in our nation's research infrastructure. I support the administration's request for a new \$50M competitive grant program for facilities improvement at land grant Universities. Programs like this support scientific innovation at institutions like the University of Florida, Florida State University, and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) and other great schools around the country.

Recently, Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the first down-select list of communities across the country vying to host the USDA Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture. I strongly support his efforts to ensure that USDA is "the most effective, most efficient, and most customer-focused agency in the federal government" and this decision to bring important USDA resources closer to many stakeholders and improve USDA's ability to attract and retain highly qualified staff is another great step toward achieving that goal. I would also like to commend the Secretary for his commitment to ensure that no ERS

or NIFA employee will be involuntarily separated during this transition, and I trust that this committee will provide him with the resources necessary to honor that promise. I request that the committee support the transition and ensure that the relocation is completed as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your time, I yield back.