

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Chairman
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Andy Harris
Ranking Member
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Harris,

I appreciate the opportunity to share my priorities and concerns as representative of Washington state's 8th congressional district. I write to respectfully request consideration of the following priorities in the Fiscal Year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

First, I ask for your support to fund agriculture research infrastructure. Along with my colleague from Kansas, Rep. Tracey Mann, and a strong group of bipartisan members, I sent a letter to the Committee urging \$365 million in investment for **agricultural research infrastructure as authorized through the Research Facilities Act (RFA) in Section 7503** of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Within NIFA, RFA funding will support competitive grants to land-grant universities and non-land-grant colleges of agriculture for facility construction, alteration, acquisition, modernization, renovation, or remodeling. Without specific investment in research facilities, many from the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. risks its competitiveness and ability to properly recruit and train the next generation of world-class researchers. This investment will reposition the United States for long-term success, competitiveness, and leadership in global agricultural and food research.

Modern agricultural research and education facilities serve as the backbone of our nation's cutting-edge agricultural and food research enterprise. But 69 percent of research facilities at U.S. colleges are at the end of their useful life. Our research facilities not only generate solutions, but also aid in recruiting a new generation of diverse scientists, innovators, and agricultural leaders. That's why we need to address our deferred research maintenance backlog and increase investments in next generation agriculture research.

Second, I want to highlight a **Community Project Funding** request from my district. I am requesting **\$3 million for the development of a new Food Distribution Center for the Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council (CDCAC)**. CDCAC provides support for individuals experiencing food insecurity: they currently support twenty-two area food pantries, meal sites and low-income senior housing facilities with over 2-million pounds of food annually; providing nutritional food to those who face food insecurity. The quantity of food CDCAC

receives and distributes has doubled in the past three years. CDCAC's current food distribution facility is inadequate to meet this increased demand, avoid food waste, and ensure the safe storage of food products and safety of employees and volunteers. A new facility will reduce travel times; expand programs focusing on local purchasing of farm goods through expansion of commercial processing equipment; improve safety measures; and provide for a dedicated volunteer and employee training space.

Third, the **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program** fund research that supports hundreds of specialty crops in Washington State. Past funding for projects in Washington have supported efforts to combat fungicide resistance in wine grapes, precision irrigation for fruit growers, and pest prevention in onions.

In the past several years, I have worked very hard to make sure specialty crop researchers have access to the resources they need and was pleased that my fix to allow waiver authority for SCRI was included in the FY 2020, 2021, and 2022 appropriations bills. Until a permanent fix is enacted, the FY 2020 language restoring the waiver authority must be included in annual appropriations bills. I urge the committee to continue to support specialty crop research by providing full funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and Block Grant in FY 2023

Next, I want to touch on the importance of funding federal nutrition assistance programs. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau show 11.2 percent of households in the U.S. reporting food insecurity. The number is higher for families with children, at 14.5 percent. Overall, 1 in 6 children don't always have enough to eat. Clearly, these programs are more important than ever.

As a pediatrician, I cannot overstate the importance of ensuring our children not only have access to food - clearly priority number 1 - but also that foods are nutritious. Poor nutrition is linked to chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. I ask the Committee to provide the necessary funding to ensure kids have access to nutritious food. That should include supporting **WIC, SNAP, TEFAP**, and more.

Within the TEFAP program, I also want to emphasize the importance of **Emergency Food Program Infrastructure Grants**, which Congress established in 2008 specifically to help emergency feeding organizations with capital, infrastructure, and operating costs associated with the collection, storage, distribution, and transportation of perishable food. Feeding America estimates that the unfunded critical capacity needs across the nation's network of 200 food banks and 60,000 partners agencies could be well over \$500 million. To begin closing this gap, I request that the committee provide \$15 million to fully fund the Emergency Food Program Infrastructure Grant program.

Lastly, I ask that you fund **school kitchen equipment grants at a level of at least \$60 million** to enable schools to serve healthier, more nutritious meals by modernizing their kitchens and updating the essential equipment needed to prepare foods that our children will enjoy. I further request you include report language lowering the minimum limit for school equipment from \$5,000 to \$1,000 to allow schools the flexibility to procure equipment needed the most.

Since 2009, Congress has made funding available to schools for the purchase of updated school kitchen equipment through the USDA School Kitchen Equipment Grant program. This support is

vital, as nearly 90% of schools need at least one piece of updated kitchen equipment and many school administrators lack the funds needed to make these investments. Many school kitchens were built decades ago and designed with little capacity beyond reheating and holding food for dining service. Without the right tools, school districts rely on expensive, unsustainable workarounds. This is especially important at a time when we are focusing on improving school nutrition and setting the stage for a lifetime of healthy eating. It doesn't matter how healthy foods are if our children won't eat them. Let's give our schools the tools they need to make healthy food taste great. I can think of no better way to support local educators, school food service, and students.

Thank you for your leadership during this process and for your consideration of the needs of my District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kim Schrier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "S".

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress