



December 12, 2018

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative,

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Rural Life, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul commend Chairmen Roberts and Conaway, and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson, for their leadership in negotiating a bipartisan, compromise Farm Bill. Agriculture policies should promote the production and access of nutritious food for all people, using the bounty from the land God has called us to tend and steward to aid the least of our brothers and sister in this country and around the world. We are pleased that the recently released Farm Bill Conference Committee Report includes provisions that protect global and domestic nutrition programs and strengthens rural supports and employment training programs.

Domestic Nutrition: In previous letters, our organizations called for maintaining and strengthening portions of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), while at the same time strengthening job training programs. The current bill makes important contributions to furthering access to food and nutrition and improving job training programs. The bill makes notable reforms to employment and training programs with the inclusion of case management. This is a positive development. Including case management in state employment plans not only improves job search effectiveness but will help foster meaningful and effective training programs. These reforms ensure that existing work requirements adequately serve people returning to the workforce and will also help support their families.

The reauthorization of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) are also welcomed. These programs remain critical to protecting vulnerable seniors from food insecurity. It is disappointing, however, that TEFAP funding was set at \$250 million instead of the previously recommended funding level of \$350 million. Finally, the inclusion of funding to incentivize organizations to address the opioid crisis in rural communities is timely, critical, and necessary to help better respond to the plague of opioid abuse.

International Food Security and Development: The Conference Committee report illustrates strong support for international food assistance programs. The Food for Peace (including nonemergency programs), McGovern-Dole, Food for Progress, and the Farmer-to-Farmer programs are continued at current authorized funding levels. Together, these programs reduce famine, improve livelihoods of small farmers so they can feed their families, help school children excel in their studies, and leverage the expertise of American volunteers to support food security outcomes for our poorest brothers and sisters overseas. We are also grateful that the Conference Committee adopted changes that will make these programs more effective and allow them to serve more people. These changes include removing the monetization requirement in Food for Peace, allowing Community Development Funds to be paired with Food for Peace development activities, making permanent local purchase in McGovern-Dole programs, and authorizing a new pilot program within Food for Progress to carry out direct funding of assistance programs.

Conservation: While it is encouraging that the Conference Committee maintains the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), it is disappointing that this comprehensive working lands program will see a substantial decrease in funding over the next ten years. The final bill proposes increasing funding for other programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which will help expand important conservation efforts.

Rural Development: We are pleased to see that the Conference Committee upheld the Senate's creation of two key programs that will support rural communities across the country. The Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) and the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program (FOTOP), will receive \$500 million and \$435 million, respectively, in mandatory funding over ten years. The final bill also provides mandatory funding to the Rural Energy for America Program and expands broadband access to help rural economies grow.

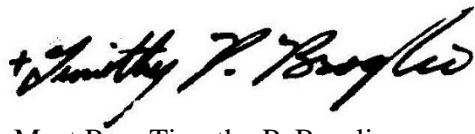
Subsidies: Farmers and ranchers deserve assistance in times of need. However, farm supports should be prioritized for farmers and ranchers who struggle to compete and thrive. It is disappointing that the Conference report does not take modest steps to limit subsidy payments to farmers who are actively engaged in farming.

The Farm Bill remains one of the most important ways the nation can demonstrate its solidarity with poor and hungry people at home and around the world, offer support to struggling family farmers and ranchers, encourage sustainable stewardship of the land, and help vulnerable rural communities thrive. In finalizing this legislative agreement, Congress has the opportunity to show true bipartisan cooperation that lifts up human dignity and serves the common good of all.

Sincerely yours,



Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



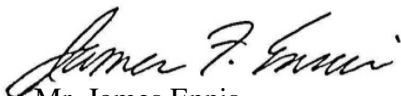
Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chair, Committee on International Justice
and Peace



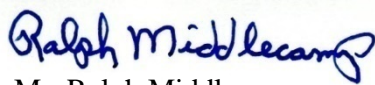
Mr. Sean Callahan
President
Catholic Relief Services



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD
President and CEO
Catholic Charities, USA



Mr. James Ennis
Executive Director
Catholic Rural Life



Mr. Ralph Middlecamp
President
National Council of the United States
Society of St. Vincent de Paul