

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 28, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Chair Stabenow,

As members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, we write to underscore our unwavering commitment to deliver relief to the farmers we represent who are saddled with debt through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We respectfully request that any future reconciliation legislation include the language from Section 12101, Section 12102, and Section 135402 of H.R.5376, the *Build Back Better Act*, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on November 11, 2021.

Our proposed language will build upon debt relief provisions incorporated into the *American Rescue Plan Act*, providing over \$6 billion in additional debt relief for economically distressed farmers and addressing the tax liability of such payments. These farmers, who have historically struggled to access federal farm programs, faced barriers when attempting to access USDA's pandemic assistance programs. Advancing meaningful debt relief will not only seek to remedy USDA's previous failures to adequately serve these farmers, but it also ensures that their operations are more financially viable and capable of accessing the billions in climate-smart agriculture investments that we hope to see included in upcoming legislation.

These critical provisions will also offer funding for loan modifications and direct assistance to individuals who have suffered discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs. Additional investments included in our proposal will boost efforts from the *American Rescue Plan Act* to expand technical and financial assistance to historically underserved farmers. When partnered with debt relief funding, successful inclusion of these provisions in any revised reconciliation legislation will be transformational for our farmers and their rural communities.

This language represents months of negotiations and compromise between Committee members and stakeholder groups. It is our goal to see these provisions enacted into law, and we look forward to continuing our work with you to pass legislation that includes these investments for our farmers.

Sincerely,



Reverend Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Michael Bennet
United States Senator