

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Conaway  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

On behalf of the nearly 6,000 commercial banks in the United States, the great majority of which are in rural areas, we write to thank the committee for the tremendous work invested in writing a new Farm Bill. Given the sharp reduction in net farm income of over 50 percent since 2013, a new Farm Bill is vital to the economic viability of our nation's farmers and ranchers and our rural communities.

We realize there may be significant changes to the Farm Bill as it moves through Congress and we look forward to presenting recommendations and further analysis of the bill. Generally, we support a strong and robust commodities title. Protecting and improving the crop insurance program is vital as it allows producers to obtain and repay loans from banks. We strongly urge enhancements and greater flexibility for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) guaranteed farm loan programs and believe rural development programs should be maintained and improved treating rural stakeholders fairly and equally.

We strongly oppose any expansion of Farm Credit System (FCS) lending or investing authorities since the FCS is a government sponsored enterprise with significant tax and funding advantages that uniquely competes against tax-paying commercial banks and other providers of products and services in the private sector. We urge the committee to not consider any additional expansion in powers of the FCS.

Thank you for consideration of our views and we look forward to working with you as the Farm Bill is debated in Congress.

Sincerely,

American Bankers Association

Independent Community Bankers of America