

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2016

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As you know, this has been a difficult year for dairy farmers. Milk prices have dropped almost 40 percent since 2014 and cheese stocks are at record high levels. The new Margin Protection Program (MPP) is not perfect but we will continue to look for ways to make improvements to the current safety net. We are asking for you to permanently extend the MPP sign up period to December 31 to encourage additional participation.

We have seen clear evidence that enrollment grows when the sign up period is extended. USDA has extended the sign up period for the last two years. Last year roughly 16,000 farmers were enrolled at the original September 30 deadline. An additional 7,190 farmers enrolled after this was extended to November 20. We believe an extension to December 31 should be made permanent to give producers additional time to make informed decisions and to improve program participation.

There are lessons to be learned with the implementation of new farm programs. Producers rely on futures information and estimates of their own financial health to make educated decisions about how much coverage they should purchase. We believe extending the sign up period to December 31 would provide more time for producers to assess the situation and maximize the sign up potential for MPP.

Thank you for your consideration.



Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson



Chairman K. Michael Conaway



Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow