

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) use its authorities to the greatest extent possible with respect to state inspected meat products.

As you are well aware, our meat processing capacity has been significantly affected by COVID-19 outbreaks in processing facilities across the country. This week, we have seen many plants begin to resume operations. However, it will take time to reach full capacity, and the livestock processing backlog is likely to remain in the near term.

Recognizing the importance of maintaining our food supply chain, on April 28, 2020, President Trump signed an executive order delegating authority under the Defense Production Act to ensure that meatpacking plants are able to continue operating while following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. We appreciate your commitment to implementing this executive order so that we are able to continue providing animal protein for Americans while ensuring the health and safety of meat plant workers.

USDA should utilize the authority under this executive order to the greatest extent possible to maintain our animal protein supply chain. Specifically, we request that you consider allowing state inspected meat and poultry products to be donated or sold across state lines during this crisis. Doing so would help ensure that we are fully utilizing our meat processing capacity and providing consumers access to safe, high quality meat products.

We appreciate your efforts to maintain our food supply chain. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

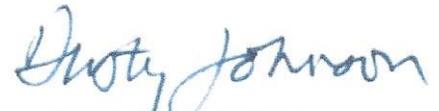
Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator



DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress