

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4607

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Carter
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

We write in support of several U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Programs, which includes Rural Business Development Grants; Rural Economic Development Direct Loans and Grants; the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program; Rural Cooperative Development Grants; Appropriate Technology Transfer to Rural Areas (ATTRA); and Value-Added Producer Grants. We respectfully request robust funding for these programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Many of these programs operate under the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) and provide loans to establish, expand, and modernize rural businesses. In doing so, the RBS programs help provide the capital, training, education, and entrepreneurial skills necessary to starting and growing businesses or finding jobs in agricultural markets and the rural economy.

Rural small businesses play a vital role in rural America, creating roughly two-thirds of new jobs and supporting the economic and social wellbeing of their communities. Accordingly, ensuring our rural small businesses are self-sufficient and prosperous is critical to the success of our rural communities, which is itself a vital investment in the United States' long-term prosperity.

As such, we respectfully request that the following programs continue to receive funding for these important efforts.

Rural Business Development Grants

This program exists to support the establishment and growth of rural businesses. By providing funding, technical assistance, and training for small rural businesses, Rural Business

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House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4607

Development Grants foster rural economic and community development. For FY21, we request robust funding for Rural Business Development Grants.

Rural Economic Development Direct Loans and Grants

By providing funding for rural projects through local utility organizations that will create and retain employment in rural areas, these programs promote job creation and enhances an individual's job opportunities through education and training in marketable skills. In fact, these programs have helped grow nearly 1,200 rural businesses and projects, aided in the creation or preservation of more than 32,000 rural jobs, and provided almost \$338 million in economic development assistance to rural communities. For FY21, we request robust funding for Rural Economic Development Direct Loans and Grants.

Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program

Although small businesses play a critical role in increasing the prosperity of rural America, many rural businesses entrepreneurs struggle to access credit and business training. To address this problem, these programs provide training, funding, and technical assistance to microloan borrowers and micro entrepreneurs, thereby helping the establishment and growth of microenterprises. For FY21, we request robust funding for Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program.

Rural Cooperative Development Grants

This program aids in the establishment, expansion, or improvement of rural cooperative businesses and other mutually owned businesses through Cooperative Development Centers. Rural Cooperative Development Grants have been very successful in improving the economies of rural communities across the country, supporting over 2,600 businesses in 39 states with the provision of more than 230 cooperative grants. For FY21, we request robust funding for Rural Cooperative Development Grants.

Appropriate Technology Transfer to Rural Areas (ATTRA)

The Appropriate Technology Transfer to Rural Areas (ATTRA) is a national sustainable farming information center that provides technical assistance to farmers, extension agents, market gardeners, agricultural researchers, and other professionals. By providing a wide variety of information and free resources on agriculture, this program helps U.S. professionals engaged in commercial agriculture to increase the profitability and sustainability of their operations. For FY21, we request robust funding for ATTRA.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4607

Value-Added Producer Grants

The Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program provides competitive grants to individual agricultural producers, groups of independent producers, producer-controlled entities, and farmer or rancher cooperatives to create or develop value-added, producer-owned businesses. These agricultural value-added businesses contribute to community economic development by helping increase farm incomes and creating new jobs that support the production, packaging, and sale of these transformed foodstuffs. For FY21, we request robust funding for Value-Added Producer Grants.

U.S. government investments in rural businesses help to drive growth, employment, and economic opportunities in rural communities. We respectfully urge the Committee to continue to robustly fund these critically important USDA Programs in the FY21 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Antonio Delgado
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Abby Finkenauer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

**Rural Development Programs Funding Request Letter to the Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee; House
Committee on Appropriations**

List of Signatories

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