

April 22, 2020

The Honorable
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. :

The American Farm Bureau Federation (Farm Bureau) supports H.R. 266, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact businesses across the country, and farmers and ranchers are not immune to the ever-increasing market volatility and supply chain disruptions. This bill expands farmer and rancher eligibility for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, provides additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and includes critical funding for hospitals and health care providers.

This bill clearly states that agriculture enterprises are eligible for the EIDL program. Extending this program to agriculture enterprises provides many agricultural producers a critical source of financing to help preserve their businesses and protects the nation's food supply after this pandemic is over. AFBF applauds Congress for including this provision.

Farm Bureau is grateful Congress authorizes an additional \$320 billion for the PPP. However, the implementation of the CARES Act funding made it difficult for farmers and ranchers to participate in the program even though Congress prioritized the disbursement of loans to businesses in underserved and rural markets. These challenges explain why the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting sectors combined received a meager 1.3 percent of the total approved funding and 2.8 percent of approved PPP applications, according to SBA data. Farm Bureau has previously communicated recommendations to Congress on ways to improve the program's assistance for agricultural producers and support for eligibility for tax-exempt agricultural organizations that assist farmers and ranchers. We ask Congress to include these additions in the next round of COVID-19 related legislation.

Farm Bureau is also appreciative for the funding provided for hospitals and health care providers and to support increased testing for COVID-19. Rural hospitals were already financially stretched before the onset of the virus and are in vital need of this assistance. Community Health Centers and rural health clinics provide health care services for many rural Americans and it is appropriate that funds be dedicated to fight the virus across the heartland.

We ask you to support farmers, ranchers and rural communities by voting in favor of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act.

Sincerely,



Zippy Duvall
President