



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

November 15, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Leahy, and Vice Chairman Shelby:

As Congress finalizes the 2023 fiscal year Omnibus appropriations legislation, we write to urge you to include in the final bill assistance for New England regions suffering from severe drought.

In August of 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced primary agricultural disaster designations for counties in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Farmers in our States are grateful for the designation, which allows them to access Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans. Agricultural producers may also receive assistance through other programs, including: the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP); the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP); the Tree Assistance Program (TAP); the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP); and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Certain businesses impacted by the drought are also eligible for assistance through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Nurseries and aquaculture producers are eligible for assistance through SBA. We are thankful that these various programs are available to help impacted producers in our States, but we are concerned that some producers have been left out of this assistance. Specifically, livestock forage (feed) producers are in dire need of help.

According to Connecticut's FSA Office and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, livestock forage production has been significantly impacted by the drought, and is an area of acute need throughout Southern New England. The FSA Office has notified our staffs

that hay losses due to this summer's drought have been staggering – some producers are reporting losses as high as 55 percent of their normal hay production. The drought has impacted the availability of feed and silage for agricultural producers which will likely cause large price increases for many agricultural products this winter. The expected regional feed shortage will have ripple effects on our local dairy enterprises.

Although FSA operates assistance programs that support producers who grow forage for their own livestock if they are grazing livestock, New England has many producers who have livestock but do not graze, and many others who grow forage for sale to other livestock producers and therefore are also not eligible to participate in forage-related assistance programs.

Many other federal programs that exist to help producers with drought and emergency situations are similarly unavailable to forage producers impacted by drought. In discussions with USDA, our staff recently learned that forage producers are also ineligible for assistance under Emergency Relief Program authorities, as the ERP only covers losses from 2020 and 2021.

New England has lost significant numbers of small dairy farms over the past decade, and we are concerned that the impacts from this drought could be the breaking point for these producers. We are also concerned that hay producers who have lost so much of their yield will sell their land to developers, permanently losing it for agricultural production. To this end, we request that Congress replenish funds from the Emergency Relief Program and expand Emergency Relief Program authorities to cover losses incurred in 2022, in addition to losses from 2021 and 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

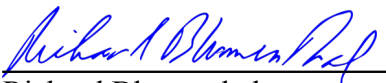
Sincerely,



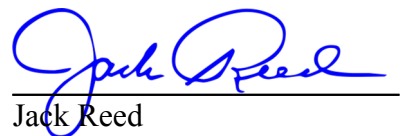
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



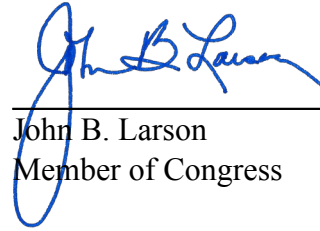
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



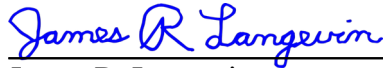
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



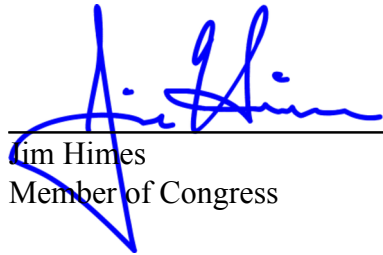
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



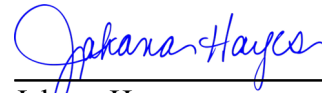
James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress