

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to you in response to proposed changes to the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Over the last year, energy costs have risen by more than four times the rate of inflation.¹ This has acutely hit America's farmers and rural small businesses, whose bottom lines have been impacted by a trifecta of rising energy bills, skyrocketing input costs, and erratic trade policy. The new REAP rule that bars eligibility for farmers looking for much-needed financial relief through this cost-saving program is irresponsible and the exact opposite of what USDA should be doing to help our rural communities address record-breaking diesel and energy prices.

Our farmers face severe financial pressures from the high costs of fuel, equipment, and fertilizer, compounded by an expensive foreign war and unpredictable tariffs.² As President Trump's conflict in Iran has approached the eight-month mark, gas, diesel, and fertilizer prices have risen precipitously, causing some farmers to raise concerns about how they will afford next year's crop. Rural small businesses are similarly facing severe financial strain, with commercial energy costs having increased by 10% and natural gas by 24% since the beginning of 2025.³

The new REAP rule that took effect in mid-October requires that REAP applicants have projects fully installed and operational for at least 12 months prior to application. Applicants must provide a full year of energy and savings data before receiving funding commitments from USDA. The last two years of uncertainty about the future of this program have created confusion and frustration in rural communities across the country who are seeking ways to bring down their costs and become more self-reliant. This new rule undermines the nature of a grant and loan guarantees program and will further prevent farmers and small businesses from accessing the very projects that can help stabilize their operations, provide an alternative revenue stream, reduce reliance on volatile energy markets, and expand rural economic development opportunities.

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.nr0.htm>

² <https://www.energy.gov/cmei/systems/farmers-guide-going-solar>

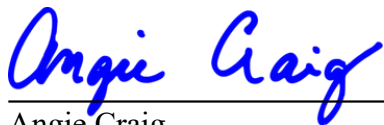
³ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/cap-testimony-before-the-house-committee-on-small-business-rural-development-energy-and-supply-chains-subcommittee/>

Renewable energy is an important way for American farmers and small businesses to get a much-needed reprieve, by reducing electricity costs and delivering an additional stable income stream. Helping our farmers generate clean, cheap electricity on-site is key to energy independence for our agricultural and rural sectors that will help blunt the impact of volatile oil prices and external shocks now and in the future.

We request that USDA revise this rule to remove the burdensome requirement that applicants must have fully installed projects for one year before receiving funding commitments from the agency. Farmers cannot afford to invest in these cost- and energy-saving measures without upfront government assistance. This is a time when we should be doubling down on affordable forms of energy — not closing off energy options — to safeguard our farmers, businesses, and food supply chain from external price shocks. We must maintain access to critical USDA rural programs that lower energy and input costs for America's farms and small businesses.

Despite this administration's stated objective to lower costs for all Americans, this is yet another decision that ignores the reality that people across the country are facing: higher costs in every aspect of their lives. This is a program that was designed to save awardees money on their long-term energy costs, and this rule will decimate its ability to do that. We are committed to working with you to ensure USDA can meet this moment for America's rural communities and give the tools our farmers need to survive the ongoing affordability crisis in America.

Sincerely,



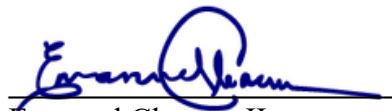
Angie Craig
House Agriculture Committee
Ranking Member



Chellie Pingree
SEEC Climate & Agriculture
Task Force Co-Chair



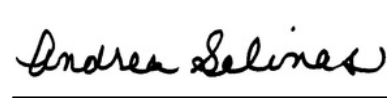
Kim Schrier, M.D.
SEEC Climate & Agriculture
Task Force Co-Chair



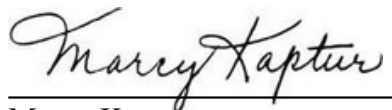
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



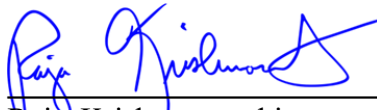
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



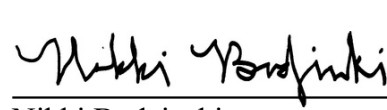
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



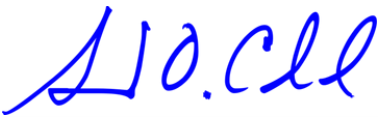
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



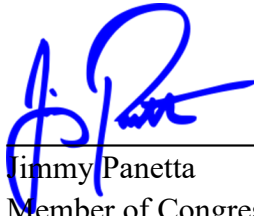
Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



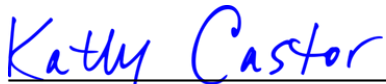
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



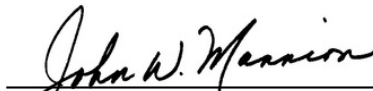
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



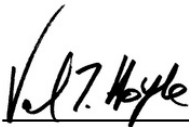
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



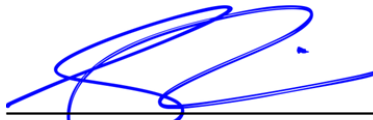
John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



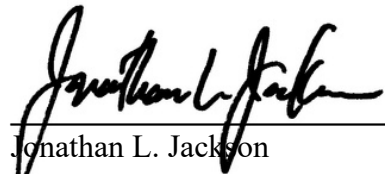
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



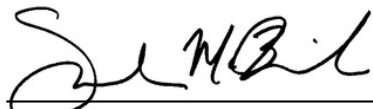
Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



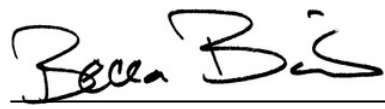
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress



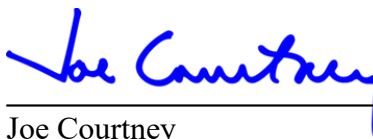
Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



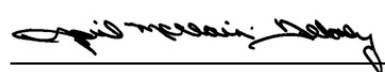
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



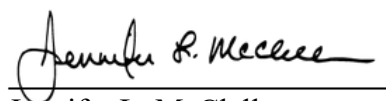
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



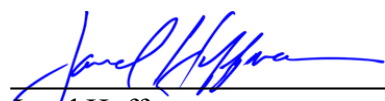
April McClain Delaney
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Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



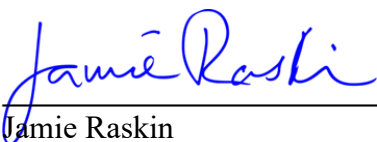
Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



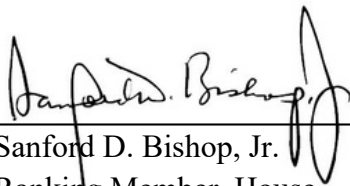
Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



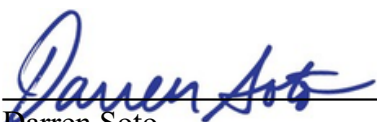
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member, House
Appropriations Subcommittee
on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related
Agencies



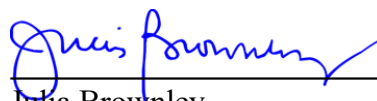
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



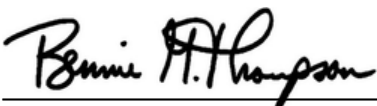
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



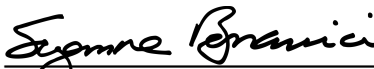
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Vice Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress