United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 28, 2026

The Honorable Stephen Vaden
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Deputy Secretary Vaden:

We write with serious concern regarding the announced reorganization of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Rather than strengthening the agency's effectiveness, this reorganization poses a risk to FSIS's core mission of protecting public health and ensuring the safety of our nation's food supply.

FSIS plays a key role in safeguarding American consumers. Not only does FSIS provide critical frontline inspection of meat, poultry, egg, and some fish products, but the agency also plays an important role in informing the public through outreach and education and coordinating with the many international, federal, state, and local agencies that play a part in food safety. When outbreaks inevitably happen, FSIS provides a rapid response to contain illness before it spreads widely.

The Deferred Resignation Program implemented last year has already resulted in a loss of more than 500 FSIS employees, straining a key agency that operates under significant pressure. Now the Administration is asking two-thirds of the FSIS staff in the Washington, D.C. area to relocate to Iowa, Georgia, or Colorado within months, which could weaken interagency coordination and rapid response efforts during foodborne illness outbreaks, creating a greater risk to consumers and our food supply. Since FSIS was not explicitly included in the July 2025 Secretarial Memorandum on USDA's proposed reorganization, FSIS stakeholders, employees, consumer advocates, and industry partners have not been able to provide meaningful comments on changes that could have significant implications for the nation's food safety system.

Losses in staff and institutional expertise as a result of this relocation could delay the identification and containment of outbreaks involving pathogens such as Salmonella, E. coli, or Listeria, allowing contaminated products to remain in commerce longer and increasing illnesses nationwide. Reduced coordination amongst FSIS and other food safety and public health agencies like the Food and Drug Administration, and state partners could also slow traceback investigations and public communication during multistate outbreaks, when rapid response is critical to prevent additional illnesses. Instead of moving its employees across the country, FSIS should be focused on maintaining food safety. Overall, this reorganization threatens to undermine FSIS's effectiveness and weakens an agency that American consumers rely on every day.

We ask that you provide a detailed description of how you will ensure that FSIS will maintain full operational capacity during and after this transition. Specifically, we ask that you provide

further details on what communication USDA has had with impacted FSIS employees, how the USDA will mitigate anticipated workforce losses, preserve critical expertise, and ensure that outbreak response, interagency coordination, and rulemaking activities are not compromised.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to receiving your response within 30 days.

Sincerely,

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

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