August 9, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway, Chairman
The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture

CC: Farm Bill House and Senate Conferees

Dear Farm Bill Conferees:

As you begin your work on the 2018 Farm Bill conference report, we write to you on the issues of rural infrastructure, improving data utilization for agricultural management, improving nutrition in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and promoting clean energy. BPC was pleased to see the Senate version of the farm bill advance with overwhelming bipartisan support, and we hope that issues between the House and Senate bills can likewise be resolved in a manner that can gain broad support and be signed by the president by the September 30 reauthorization deadline.

We commend the inclusion of critical components relating to rural infrastructure programs, including the Water, Waste Disposal and Wastewater Facility Grants that cover much needed pre-development costs, and strong support for the Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentives program. We urge that House and Senate Conferees focus on these critical issues as they resolve differences between the bills, and that they adopt:

- The Senate substitute amendment proposal by Sens. Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet to conduct research into utilization of data for more precise management of dryland farming agricultural practices;
- The Senate substitute amendment's approach of maintaining the current system of administering the SNAP-Ed program through state agencies that can continue to sub-grant to partners based on state and local needs;
- The House bill's provisions on data collection for SNAP retail food store transactions, which would help USDA assess its nutrition promotion efforts by giving the agency better information on the products purchased with SNAP funds;
- Report language stating that diet quality should be a core objective of SNAP to clarify for USDA that nutrition should be a priority—along with food insecurity and fiscal integrity—when administering the program; and

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- The Senate substitute's amendment proposal by Sen. Michael Bennet promoting biogas and carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration (CCUS) technologies in rural communities.

Thank you for taking these important provisions into consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Michele Stockwell
Executive Director, BPC Action

BPC Action is the premier federal political advocate for bipartisan solutions to the challenges facing our country—including health, security, and economic growth. We are committed to seeing bipartisan policy solutions enacted into law, and we work closely with our 501(c)(3) partner, the Bipartisan Policy Center, to advance smart policies through the legislative process.