

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC, 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to share our disappointment regarding the Department of Agriculture’s (“USDA”) recent decision to end¹ its partnership with bipartisan state attorneys general (“state AGs”) to enhance competition and tackle anticompetitive market structures in food and agricultural markets.² These types of partnerships often allow for more impactful enforcement, helping to further develop the law, ensure consistent enforcement, and protect residents across the country,³ as state officials have a “familiarity, [and] intense interest... in the business and economic affairs” of their own state.⁴ While we applaud the USDA and Department of Justice’s (“DOJ”) Antitrust Division’s partnership to “protect competition in key agricultural markets,”⁵ ending the partnership with state AGs threatens competition and is contrary to President Trump’s stated goals of lowering food prices,⁶ helping struggling independent farmers, and promoting national security.

¹ The Capitol Forum, “USDA Shuttters Partnership with State Attorneys General to Improve Competition in Agriculture,” September 23, 2025, <https://library.thecapitolforum.com/auth/login?r=%2Fdocs%2F8xyw5adn8djh>; The Capitol Forum, X, September 24, 2025, https://x.com/Capitol_Forum/status/1970851460872274092; Lisa Held, “USDA Ends Program to Help States Fight Monopolies,” Civil Eats, September 26, 2025, <https://civileats.com/2025/09/26/usda-ends-program-to-help-states-fight-monopolies/>.

² USDA, “USDA Launches Historic Partnership with Bipartisan State Attorneys General to Help Reduce Anticompetitive Barriers Across Food, Agriculture Supply Chains,” press release, July 19, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2023/07/19/usda-launches-historic-partnership-bipartisan-state-attorneys-general-help-reduce-anticompetitive>.

³ National Association of Attorneys General, “Interjurisdictional Collaboration,” <https://www.naag.org/issues/consumer-protection/interjurisdictional-collaboration/>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, “The Federal Government and the States: A Partnership for Competition,” Remarks by John H. Shenefield, Assistant Attorney General, Antitrust Division, Before the 1978 Mid-Term Meeting, National Association of Attorneys General, December 2, 1978, p. 1-2. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/atr/speech/file/1240181/dl?inline#:~:text=It%20is%20the%20legitimate%20and%20additions%20to%20the%20antitrust%20arsenal>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, “Justice Department and USDA Coordinate to Protect Competition in Agricultural Inputs,” press release, September 29, 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-and-usda-coordinate-protect-competition-agricultural-inputs>; Memorandum of Understanding Between The Antitrust Division, Department of Justice, and The Department of Agriculture, Relative to Cooperation with Respect to Strengthening Competition for Agricultural Inputs, <https://www.justice.gov/atr/media/1415501/dl?inline>.

⁶ “Delivering Emergency Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis,” The White House, Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/delivering-emergency-price-relief-for-american-families-and-defeating-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>; “Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Delivers Emergency Price Relief for American Families to Defeat the Cost-of-Living Crisis,” The White House, Jan. 22, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-delivers-emergency-price-relief-for-american-families-to-defeat-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>.

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In the summer of 2023, USDA launched the Agricultural Competition Partnership (“ACP”) with 31⁷ bipartisan state AGs to “enhance competition and protect consumers in food and agriculture markets, including in grocery, meat and poultry processing, and other markets.”⁸ This was a part of a whole-of-government approach to address consolidation,⁹ and in response to a request from a bipartisan group of state AGs for USDA to help coordinate and cooperate with them to address agriculture market concentration and establish a grant to aid the states’ work.¹⁰

Through this effort, USDA provided \$15 million in funding, support, and expertise to under-resourced AG offices to enhance state capacity and coordination between federal and state law enforcement, with the goal of fairer, more competitive markets and supply chain resilience. This included a focus on price gouging and addressing market structure problems, barriers to competition, and conflicts of interest that result in fewer choices for consumers and producers.

Consolidation in the food and agriculture markets is significant and remains a growing problem for farmers and consumers.¹¹ In consolidated markets like food and agriculture, dominant firms are able to abuse their market power, cutting costs and underinvesting in workers, supply chains, and key food infrastructure; forcing consumers and small businesses to pay higher prices; and reducing choice and quality in the marketplace.¹² As consolidation has accelerated, hundreds of thousands of independent farms have shuttered, hurting rural communities, limiting production, and hindering food accessibility.¹³

⁷ USDA, “Agricultural Competition Partnership Members,” <https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/fair-competitive/ag-competition-partnership-members>.

⁸ USDA, “Agricultural Competition Partnership FAQs,”

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/fair-competitive/competitive-partnership-faqs>; USDA, “USDA Launches Historic Partnership with Bipartisan State Attorneys General to Help Reduce Anticompetitive Barriers Across Food and Agriculture Supply Chains,” press release, July 19, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2023/07/19/usda-launches-historic-partnership-bipartisan-state-attorneys-general-help-reduce-anticompetitive>.

⁹ “Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy,” The White House, July 9, 2021, <https://archive.is/N3Vna>.

¹⁰ Letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack from bipartisan state AGs, December 21, 2021, https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2022/docs/Ltr_PackersAndStockyards.pdf.

¹¹ “Retail Consolidation: Crisis Across the Food Chain,” Farm Action, June 8, 2023,

<https://farmaction.us/2023/06/08/retailconsolidation-crisis-across-the-food-chain/>; Basel Musharbash, “Kings Over the Necessaries of Life: Monopolization and the Elimination of Competition in America’s Agriculture System,” Farm Action, September 2024, https://farmaction.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Kings-Over-the-Necessaries-of-Life-Monopolization-and-the-Elimination-of-Competition-in-Americas-Agriculture-System_Farm-Action.pdf.

¹² Hannah Tremblay, “How Consolidation by Meatpacking Giants is Hurting Farmers and Consumers, and What the Biden Administration is Doing About It,” FarmAid, November 4, 2024,

<https://www.farmaid.org/issues/corporate-power/how-consolidation-by-meatpacking-giants-is-hurting-farmers-and-consumers-and-what-the-biden-administration-is-doing-about-it/>; Mia DiFelice, “The Real Root of High Food Prices: Corporate Greed and Consolidation,” Food and Water Watch, Mar. 26, 2024,

<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2024/03/26/high-food-prices-consolidation/>; Daisy Pearson, “How are food billionaires getting richer in a cost of living crisis? Monopoly power,” Global Justice Now, January 19, 2024, <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2024/01/how-are-food-billionaires-gettingricher-in-a-cost-of-living-crisis-monopoly-power/>.

¹³ See, e.g., Eliana Zeballos, Xiao Dong, and Ergys Islamaj, “A Disaggregated View of Market Concentration in the Food Retail Industry,” USDA, January 23, 2023, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/105558/err-314.pdf?v=15264>, Mary K. Hendrickson, Philip H. Howard, Emily M. Miller and Douglas H. Constance, “The Food System: Concentration and Its Impacts,” Family Farm Action Alliance, Nov. 19, 2020, <https://farmaction.us/wpcontent/uploads/2021/05/Hendrickson-et-al.-2020.-Concentration-and-Its->

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Consistent with your stated goals to “promote American agriculture; ensur[e] a safe, nutritious, and secure food supply; enhanc[e] rural prosperity; and protect our National Forests”¹⁴ the USDA should directly support law enforcement efforts that promote competition in line with the agency's priorities. Although the Trump Administration has claimed it intends to “deliver emergency price relief” to defeat the “cost-of-living crisis”¹⁵ and implement “America First Priorities,”¹⁶ walking away from the ACP with state AGs signals you are abandoning antitrust efforts that could actually address rising food prices for consumers and rising costs for farmers.

Following the cancellation of the bipartisan ACP and the signing of the MOU with the DOJ, Americans deserve clarity regarding what this administration plans to do to promote competition in food and agriculture markets and “deliver emergency price relief” to American farmers, workers, and consumers. As such, we request answers to the following questions no later than February 1st, 2025:

1. Did USDA discuss the cancellation of the Agricultural Competition Partnership with state AGs? If so, how far in advance? Were all of the participating states notified? How did the participating states respond?
2. Since September 2022, how much money have states utilized under this partnership?
3. Are you aware of any investigations or cases that have or are relying on this funding? If so, what are they?
4. Are you committed to enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act to ensure the food and agricultural markets are competitive?
5. What particular markets does USDA plan to focus on when “strengthening competition” under the USDA-DOJ MOU?
6. Does USDA plan to include state AGs when USDA or DOJ are enforcing or considering enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act?
7. The USDA-DOJ MOU focuses on “strengthening competition for agricultural inputs”¹⁷ while the state partnership speaks to “food markets... including... grocery, meat and poultry processing.”¹⁸ Is USDA committed to addressing consolidation in food and agriculture markets more broadly?

[Impacts_FINAL_Addended.pdf](#), and Adrienne Crezo, “Merging grocery giants threaten Americans’ food security,” Center for Science in the Public Interest, February 23, 2024, <https://www.cspi.org/cspi-news/merging-grocery-giants-threaten-americans-food-security>.

¹⁴ USDA, “Secretary’s Memorandum 1078-004: Directive on Departmental Grant and Cooperative Agreement Priorities,” March 13, 2025, <https://rsp.wisc.edu/files/SM%201078-004.pdf>.

¹⁵ “Delivering Emergency Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis,” The White House, Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/delivering-emergency-price-relief-for-american-families-and-defeating-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>; “Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Delivers Emergency Price Relief for American Families to Defeat the Cost-of-Living Crisis,” The White House, Jan. 22, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-delivers-emergency-price-relief-for-american-families-to-defeat-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>.

¹⁶ “President Trump’s America First Priorities,” The White House, Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/01/president-trumps-america-first-priorities/>.

¹⁷ Memorandum of Understanding Between The Antitrust Division, Department of Justice, and The Department of Agriculture, Relative to Cooperation with Respect to Strengthening Competition for Agricultural Inputs, <https://www.justice.gov/atr/media/1415501/dl?inline>.

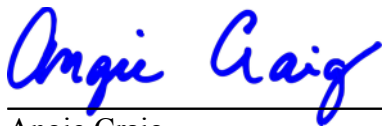
¹⁸ USDA, “USDA Launches Historic Partnership with Bipartisan State Attorneys General to Help Reduce Anticompetitive Barriers Across Food and Agriculture Supply Chains,” press release, July 19, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2023/07/19/usda-launches-historic-partnership-bipartisan-state-attorneys-general-help-reduce-anticompetitive>.

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8. If USDA is committed to addressing consolidation in food and agriculture markets more broadly, what are your plans to do so?
9. Does USDA plan to include state AGs when necessary or beneficial when working alongside the DOJ?
10. Does USDA commit to sharing information with state AGs?
11. Does USDA commit to update the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on the Judiciary]] regarding enforcement actions under the USDA-DOJ MOU?

Sincerely,



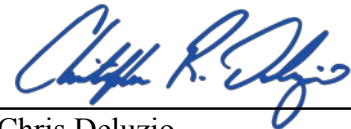
Angie Craig
Member of Congress



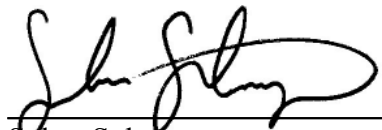
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



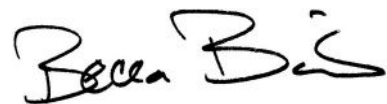
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress




Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Casar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "G".

Greg Casar
Member of Congress

cc: Abigail Slater, Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust, Department of Justice