

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Mike Conaway
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson:

The undersigned organizations reiterate our strong support for the federally authorized research and promotion programs, commonly known as checkoffs, in which our farmer, rancher and processor members participate. During consideration of H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, we strongly urge you to oppose the Brat/Blumenauer amendment which would impose unnecessary, duplicative and counterproductive burdens on programs funded completely by producers with their own money. The amendment allegedly aims to improve the transparency and accountability of commodity checkoff programs, but should be soundly rejected because it takes control away from producers and will gut the programs that U.S. agriculture relies on to build demand for our products.

The Brat/Blumenauer amendment restricts these self-help checkoff programs by prohibiting practically all research projects done at universities, coordinated projects with public health associations and partnerships with producer education organizations. These sweeping prohibitions are the result of the amendment's ban on contracts with any party that engages in advocacy – even though the advocacy has nothing to do with the entity's partnership with checkoffs. In addition, the amendment adds duplicative requirements that will waste farmers' money without any corresponding benefit when those funds could be going to increase consumption and enhance producers' profitability.

Checkoff programs are established and approved in referenda by producers. With oversight provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, producers have taken it upon themselves to fund over \$1.1 billion of research, promotion, and consumer education programs annually **at no cost to the federal government**. In these austere budgetary times, our producers should be commended and certainly deserve the support of Congress.

Our members see the checkoff programs as an investment in their families' future which they and their fellow producers have voluntarily adopted. At a time of low farm incomes, we cannot afford to lose these important programs. We urge you and your colleagues to strongly oppose the Brat/Blumenauer amendment.

Sincerely,

Alabama Peanut Producers Association
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Forest and Paper Association
AmericanHort
American Mushroom Institute
American Soybean Association
American Wood Council
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
Idaho Dairymen's Association
Mississippi Peanut Growers Association
National All-Jersey
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Christmas Tree Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Watermelon Association
North American Blueberry Council
North American Meat Institute
North Carolina Peanut Growers Association
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
Peanut Growers Cooperative Marketing Association
Popcorn Institute
Produce Marketing Association
Society of American Florists
South East Dairy Farmers Association
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Texas Citrus Mutual
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
Virginia Peanut Growers Association
Western Peanut Growers Association