

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We write you in support of Frederick County, Maryland's proposal to host the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Economic Research Service (ERS).

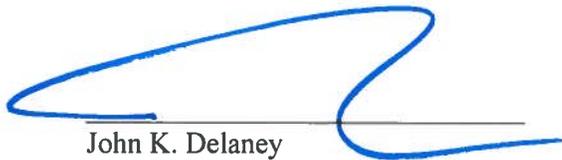
We are concerned with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) decision to relocate NIFA and ERS without fully evaluating the potential effects such a move would have on the Department and its workforce. However, we believe that by choosing a qualified location in Maryland, such as Frederick County, it can minimize the disruption to the dedicated employees and their families and avoid disturbing each agency's important work. Maryland can provide the added benefits the Department seeks in relocating out of Washington, D.C., while remaining in close proximity to the federal stakeholders with which NIFA and ERS work closely.

Frederick County is an ideal location to host NIFA and ERS as it meets USDA's criteria in choosing a potential site while ensuring the agencies can continue to carry out their missions in providing critical research, education, and extension activities to address national agriculture priorities. Located within 45 miles of Washington, D.C., the county is in close proximity of the USDA headquarters with the benefit of a lower cost of living for employees. Additionally, the county hosts or is in close proximity to institutions of higher education and Land-Grant research universities, affording USDA a competitive advantage in recruiting talent and enhancing the Land Grant institutions historical partnership with the Department. Frederick County also ranks among the top 10% in the country for dairy sales and is first in Maryland for the value of sales in grains. With such a strong agriculture economy and community, relocating to Frederick County would place the agencies in the community they serve.

Maryland has already proven to be an effective partner with the federal government. It hosts many federal institutions and is home to thousands of federal employees. Frederick County hosts Fort Detrick and supports federal sites for Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Cancer Institute-Frederick, FEMA-National Emergency Training Center (NETC), and Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA). Additionally, the sites proposed by the county are easily accessible through various modes of transportation. The county contains major highways and interstates including I-270, I-70, US-15, and US-340 in addition to commuter options such as the MARC rail and bus service that connects to the D.C. area. There are three major airports all located within 50 miles of the county; Dulles International Airport, Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, and Reagan National Airport - all allowing for the agencies to be easily accessible to visitors.

With a talented workforce, access to a wide array of transportation services, and a lower cost of living and lower operating costs than D.C., Frederick County can be the ideal location for NIFA and ERS. We urge all due consideration be given to Frederick County's proposal and welcome any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature of John K. Delaney, consisting of a large, sweeping loop followed by a horizontal line and a short vertical stroke.

John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

A blue ink handwritten signature of Jamie Raskin, written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress