

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6000
202-224-2035

October 27, 2022

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (CAA; P.L. 116-260), Congress provided the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of the Secretary with more than \$11 billion to help farmers, ranchers, loggers, restaurants, schools, and others respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the direction of Congress, and to offset price and revenue declines experienced during the pandemic, USDA successfully distributed billions of dollars of relief to producers of agricultural commodities through a variety of efforts including top-up payments for crop and livestock producers, payments to contract livestock and poultry producers, and grants to food processors and distributors to ensure safety during the pandemic, among other priorities. Many of USDA's efforts appropriately aligned with the intent of Congress to help agriculture and food industry stakeholders respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am concerned, however, that as the need for additional financial resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has waned, USDA has begun using unobligated balances from Section 751 of Subtitle B of Title VII of Division N of the CAA for projects unrelated to mitigating the impacts of the coronavirus. Because of my concerns, I request a report of all programs and activities funded or intended to be funded using the amounts appropriated under Section 751 of the CAA (134 Stat. 2105-2108) and USDA's rationale explaining how the use of said funds is consistent with the law. For each program or activity please include the following information in your response:

1. The amount obligated and expended with corresponding dates for each action;
2. Copies of any guidance provided by the Office of the General Counsel or Office of Budget and Program Analysis related to the use of these funds; and
3. Copies of any economic analysis provided by the Office of the Chief Economist related to the use of these funds.

I look forward to your answers to each individual question and request responses by November 30, 2022.

Sincerely,



John Boozman
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry