Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 12, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing in support of the proposed Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection rule. We understand that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is very supportive of the rule and would like to inquire when you plan to move forward.

According to the proposed rule released on January 27, 2012, USDA demonstrated the effectiveness of the new poultry inspection system through a pilot program run in 25 poultry plants for over 14 years. The proposed rule included data that compared performance measures at the pilot plants and traditional plants, and found that the pilot plants performed as well as or better than traditional plants on key standards.

Most importantly, the peer-reviewed risk assessment included in the proposed rule demonstrates that at least 5,000 foodborne illnesses would be prevented if the poultry inspection system were modernized. Additionally, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) projects that almost $80 million in health care costs would be saved on an annual basis by preventing foodborne illnesses. Furthermore, FSIS budget cost-savings analysis projects a $14.6 million reduction in government spending in the first year and savings of about $39.6 million in subsequent years.

We are interested to know when you plan to send the final rule to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and your timeline for implementation of the rule, once finalized.

Sincerely,

Kay R. Hagan

Gayle Chamblin

Joe Donnelly

Chris Coons

John Cornyn

Mark R Warner

John Boozman

Heidi Heitkamp

Chuck Grassley

Amy Klobuchar

MARK ROMAR

Roy Blunt