TAMMY BALDWIN
WISCONSIN

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

October 12, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

I am writing to raise serious concerns about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) newly imposed matching requirement on the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII), which threatens to undermine a proven resource of funding that supports dairy farmers and processors in Wisconsin and across the country. By requiring each Dairy Business Innovation Center to provide a match that Congress never intended and centers do not have the resources to meet, USDA is threatening the program's survival and the success of the farmers and producers that it supports. This new financial hurdle comes at a time when dairy farmers are already struggling financially with fewer market opportunities and record-high fuel prices amid President Trump's trade war and war in Iran. I urge USDA to reverse this new requirement and ensure that the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives may continue providing a lifeline for dairy farmers and processors when they need it most.

Last month, USDA issued the Fiscal Year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity to the four Dairy Business Innovation Centers in Wisconsin, Vermont, Tennessee and California, and for the first time, attached a new requirement that the centers provide a 25 percent cash match—up to $1 million from each center. USDA indicated in their notice that the agency would only accept cash and would refuse any in-kind contribution, such as technical assistance, to meet the requirement. The centers do not have the capital available to meet this new matching requirement, putting the future of the program at risk. Congress has consistently supported the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives on a bipartisan basis and has provided funding for the program without requiring centers to provide a cash match. By imposing this new requirement, USDA is adding a financial condition that Congress never intended and that could effectively bring a successful, bipartisan program to an end.

I request that USDA reissue the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives without the new matching requirement. These initiatives are a lifeline to dairy farmers and processors in over 40 states by providing direct farm technical assistance, business consulting, strategic planning, marketing, product development, and distribution. Additionally, a significant portion of Dairy Business Innovation funds are dedicated as small-dollar grants to small- and medium-sized, family-owned businesses. These dairy businesses provide job opportunities in rural communities and help their economies thrive.

The Administration's decision to put new barriers in the way of assistance for dairy farmers comes when they can afford it the least. Wisconsin farmers do backbreaking work to produce world-class products that feed the world. The President came into office promising to support our farmers but instead has taken every opportunity to make their livelihoods increasingly more difficult. Between the trade war and unnecessary war in Iran, Wisconsin farmers are paying more for everything. I request that the Administration reverse course on this decision.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator