

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2020

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

The Honorable Eugene Scalia
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave NW C-2318
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Perdue and Secretary Scalia,

I write to inquire about the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Labor's (DOL) actions to prioritize the training needs and enrollment of students impacted by the announcement to deactivate U.S. Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers.

On May 24, 2019, the Department of Labor announced the termination of an interagency agreement that provided for the operation of 25 Civilian Conservation Centers (CCC) within the U.S. Forest Service. Over a third of CCC program facilities were slated for permanent closure. Thankfully, after strong bipartisan opposition, this plan was scrapped. However, these facilities now need assistance in retaining and recruiting students.

Following the May 24th announcement, our office heard from students who not only feared they would be unable to complete their training because they were told their Center was slated for closure, but that they also feared they would lose their homes. Most Job Corps Centers are residential facilities and living on site is a requirement. For some students their home at Job Corps is the most secure and stable living environment they have ever experienced.

I also heard from Job Corps Center Directors and Guidance Counselors that student recruitment and retention was impacted by the announced closure. Though the plan to close 25 Job Corps Centers was reversed, the language in that announcement left the door open to future closures and only added uncertainty for counselors recommending the Job Corps programs to students. Following the closure announcement, some Center Directors were directed to advise students to start looking for a new home before they even completed their training program because their particular facility was slated for closure.

In an email dated August 9, 2019 from DOL's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, my office was informed that DOL's Employment and Training Administration "is working with the USDA to prioritize the training needs of impacted students" including re-admission for those who may have left in the wake of the

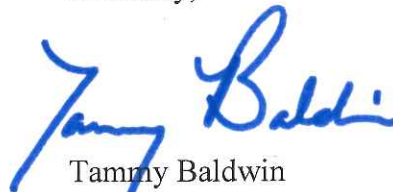
announcement. Given the media coverage and bipartisan pushback of this plan, it stands to reason that some prospective students and employers are unaware that the CCC is still open or worry that the centers are still slated for closure, hampering the ability of CCC staff to recruit new students. Therefore, I request that your departments establish a plan to recruit and retain students.

In addition, please provide answers to the following questions.

1. How have student recruitment and retention efforts been impacted by the proposed closure of the 25 U.S. Forest Service Civilian Conservation Centers (CCC) overall and individually at each of the 25 centers?
2. What were the student enrollment numbers for the two reporting periods before, and after the May 24, 2019, announcement to terminate the interagency agreement between the Department of Labor and the U.S. Forest Service at the 25 CCCs?
3. Have CCCs had students who left the Job Corp Program while it was slated for closure and then didn't return to the program after the Administration rescinded its original plan? If so, what are your departments doing to help these student finish their training?
4. Please explain in detail what DOL and USDA have done to prioritize the training needs of impacted students, including re-admitting students to the program since the May 24, 2019, announcement?
5. Please explain the newly established metrics and ways USDA and DOL plan to collect data that USDA said was necessary to measure success mentioned in Secretary Perdue's July 9th 2019 letter to Congress.
6. What have your agencies done to inform the public, particularly those who direct or recruit students to the Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers, that the Centers will not be closed and Centers are still accepting applicants?

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" and last name "Baldwin" clearly legible.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator