

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

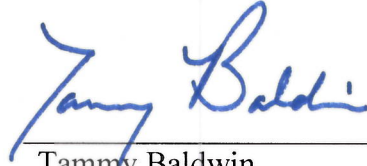
I write to ask that you address the urgent challenges facing dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across the country. The past few years have been very difficult for dairy farmers, and many have decided to stop milking. Once again, family dairy farmers are facing yet another year of low prices and uncertain markets. Without prompt action, many more may be forced to stop farming. Washington has neglected this problem for too long and Congress must act to ensure that Wisconsin dairy farmers have meaningful tools to manage their risk in the face of these difficult market conditions.

In particular, I urge you to build on the provisions I helped secure in the Senate's FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which was passed unanimously by the Appropriations Committee but has yet to be signed into law. As Congress considers unfinished legislation held over from last year, we should act now and enact these critical reforms. This bill included important reforms to the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP). This program is an essential tool for dairy farmers, but it has fallen short of providing meaningful protection and needs updates that would be effective this year in order to respond to the challenges our family farmers face. I request that you include updates to better reflect the costs of production faced by farmers, as well as the margin needed to provide adequate catastrophic protection. This reform would be an important step forward as we continue our effort to make the Margin Protection Program work better for dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across the country.

I also support longer-term efforts to expand dairy insurance tools, including enhancing the Livestock Gross Margin tool. However, these tools alone will not address the short-term challenges many farmers face.

The health of Wisconsin's rural economy rises and falls with the strength of our dairy industry and our dairy farm families. It is time for Congress to act to put meaningful tools in place immediately. Thank you for considering these requests.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator