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United States Senate

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February 22, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Shalanda D. Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Brenda Mallory
Chair
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Acting Director Young, and Chair Mallory:

Thank you for your support of our nation's biobased economy. We write concerning recent initiatives by the Administration regarding biobased products. We encourage you to make further improvements to the USDA BioPreferred® Program and leverage USDA's long-standing expertise in biobased products. Further decarbonizing our nation's consumer products and the products consumed by federal agencies is a meaningful step in addressing the climate crisis. Growing the biobased economy supports good paying jobs for American workers and positions American companies to continue to lead the world in biobased innovation.

As you know, consumers around the world are demanding plant-based and sustainable materials for consumer goods. Renewable chemicals, biobased plastics, and other biobased products are effective tools in reducing our nation's dependence on petroleum while creating markets for our nation's farmers.

We are pleased to see President Biden's commitment to sustainable procurement outlined in his recent Executive Order and subsequent Federal Sustainability Plan. We encourage you to use this opportunity to strengthen USDA's BioPreferred® program as the industry standard for sustainable procurement in government agencies. Congress has made clear through previous Farm Bills and subsequent funding our strong desire to see BioPreferred® lead the way for sustainable federal procurement.

Unfortunately, in recent years, federal procurement of BioPreferred® products have failed to increase despite significant product innovations. We encourage OMB and USDA to educate procurement officers on the benefits of BioPreferred® products and routinely measure the progress of the program.

USDA's BioPreferred® label also remains an area for significant growth. As consumers continue to seek sustainable products, this label has the potential to promote consumer confidence in the expanding array of biobased products.

The 2018 Farm Bill directed the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Commerce to jointly develop NAICS codes for renewable chemicals and biobased products. In December of 2021, OMB declined to do so, citing the need to collect additional data and instead create product codes for NAPCS. While we are grateful for this step, we encourage you to continue working with industry partners to work toward the establishment of NAICS codes. We also ask that the creation of NAPCS codes be completed swiftly and is correlated with NAICS codes for each product segment in the biobased economy. The NAPCS codes provide information on the products but fails to capture the multiple industries in which the product is sold.

Meaningful federal investments in biobased products create jobs, promote sustainable business practices, and improve our environment. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to rural America and our nation's farmers.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator