November 13, 2026

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dr. Andy Harris
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hoeven, Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Ranking Member Bishop:

As Secretaries and Commissioners of Agriculture representing states impacted by the devastating freeze event in April 2026 in the Mid-Atlantic region, we write with enthusiastic support of the Federal appropriations request submitted by Members of the Senate and House from the region for emergency agricultural disaster funding to provide relief to farmers facing losses from the recent freeze in either the Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill or as part of a supplemental funding bill this year.

In the early morning hours of April 21, 2026, the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States experienced a severe temperature drop, resulting in a freeze that devastated specialty crops

across seven states including Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, New York, New Jersey, and West Virginia. Initial reports out of Maryland alone indicated devastating and historic losses; according to the Maryland Farm Bureau, specialty crop producers in Maryland estimated an average of 67% crop loss from the freeze, with some experiencing total loss of their season's crops. Additionally, according to the Maryland Wineries Association, Maryland vineyards projected a $30.4 million loss in anticipated wine sales for the 2026 vintage.

The months following this freeze event provided further clarity on the scale of the damage incurred by specialty crop producers resulting from the freeze. Producers across the region continue to report significant crop losses, with some losing their entire crop for the season. This is further exacerbated by the labor required to continue to maintain their farms in the hopes of having a harvestable crop next season, all without the revenue from this season's crop to cover costs. Specialty crop producers in the region estimate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic losses, both from the sale of the crop itself and from value-added items produced from those crops.

Our states have led action to address this emergency for specialty crops across the region. States across the Mid-Atlantic submitted formal Gubernatorial requests to USDA for disaster declarations, which were approved throughout the summer. However, gaps in eligibility for specialty crops within Federal emergency relief programs made these resources inaccessible for many specialty crop producers in the region. We are appreciative of USDA's commitment to evaluate these programs and meaningfully address challenges in qualification for specialty crops, but this long-term action does not address the urgent and immediate need for relief by producers from this freeze event.

The Federal government is a critical partner to states in supporting the agricultural industry and its farmers, in both good times and bad. This freeze event has made policymakers at the state and Federal levels aware of the gaps in relief programs for specialty crops, and our continued partnership in updating those programs will be crucial moving forward.

In the meantime, producers in the Mid-Atlantic region are in dire need of support and relief worthy of Federal investment and action. We are grateful to our Congressional partners for championing this issue and submitting this appropriations request. We extend our strongest support for this appropriations request.

Sincerely,

Kevin Atticks
Maryland Secretary of Agriculture

Russell C. Redding
Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture



Katie Frazier
Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry



Richard A. Ball
New York Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets



Kent A. Leonhardt
West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture



Edward D. Wengyrn
New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture



Wm. Donald Clifton II
Delaware Secretary of Agriculture