

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 24, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to express our deep concern about the recent rise in avian influenza—a now seasonal epidemic impacting poultry farmers and driving up grocery prices across the United States. In the past 30 days, USDA recorded 90 new detections.¹ From backyard flocks in Virginia to large commercial turkey operations in Minnesota, avian influenza season is returning in full force. And as we approach the holiday season, it is concerning that without avian influenza surveillance at full capacity, families across America may eat without traditionally American-produced centerpieces on their holiday dinner tables.

Each year, the flight of migratory birds marks the start of another challenging flu season for poultry farmers—whether they raise chickens, egg-laying hens, or turkeys. Wild birds no know boundaries between borders, and this year is no different. In the past 30 days, over 1.6 million birds have been infected.² According to USDA data, more than 514,000 turkeys were affected by bird flu outbreaks in October alone—and wholesale turkey prices are expected to rise as a result.³ Poultry farmers are working tirelessly to ensure every family has access to a Thanksgiving meal this year, but the ongoing government shutdown and workforce reductions have made it harder for them to track and manage this flu season effectively.

Recent reports indicate that the USDA-coordinated National Animal Health Laboratory Network has suspended its weekly calls due to the government shutdown—reducing appropriate coordination and critical information sharing that is imperative to combating avian influenza.⁴ While we are relieved that USDA has prioritized avian influenza funding and research in its contingency plan, we remain deeply concerned that furloughs at USDA and CDC⁵, recent

¹ Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. (2025). United State Department of Agriculture. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/commercial-backyard-flocks>

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2025). Livestock, dairy, and poultry outlook: September 2025 (Report No. LDP-M-375).

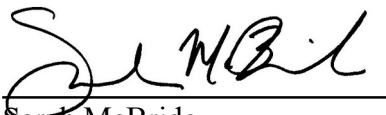
⁴ Bird flu is Back. (2025, October). *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/22/health/h5n1-bird-flu.html>

⁵ Government shutdown means many CDC experts are skipping a pivotal meeting on infectious disease. (2025, October 20). *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/infectious-diseases-cdc-atlanta-11c4f864368f8e5aa3782ed6d06bbf0b>

cutbacks in staffing, and RIFs⁶, are hampering the federal government's ability to monitor outbreaks and alert farmers in real time.⁷

We respectfully call on the Department to reestablish avian influenza surveillance and research programs to their prior level of excellence—and strengthen them further—to protect all poultry, dairy, and livestock farmers from further impact. Without swift action to reduce viral loads, the economic toll—from farm losses to rising grocery costs—will continue to grow.

Sincerely,



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress
Chair, Subcommittee on
Livestock and Foreign
Agriculture



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

⁶ Bird flu surges among poultry amid a scaled back federal response. (2025, November 6). National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/11/06/nx-s1-5600125/bird-flu-risk-outbreak-trump-administration>

⁷ Lapse of Funding Plan. (2025). *United States Department of Agriculture*. <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fy2026-usda-lapse-plan.pdf>

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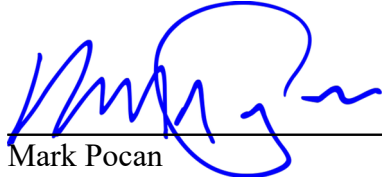
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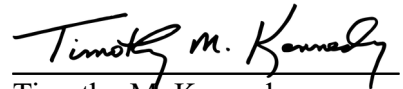
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Ranking Member, Committee
on Agriculture



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



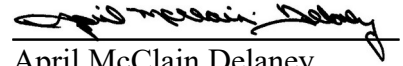
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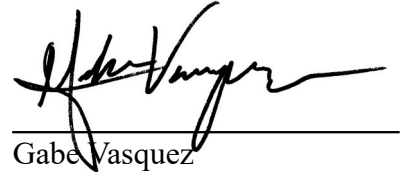
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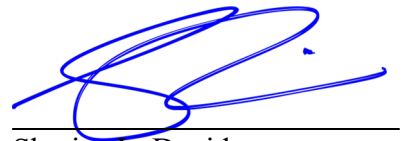
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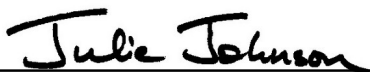
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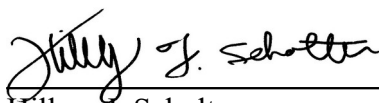
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Member of Congress



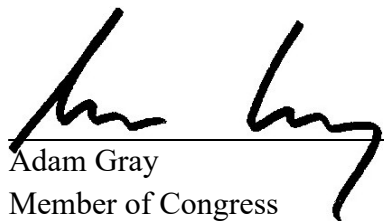
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