

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1314

June 25, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1301 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write today to express concern over recent news reports indicating that U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials have sought to avoid publicizing scientific research that explores the effects of climate change on agriculture. A *Politico* article published on June 23, 2019 details a “persistent pattern” of avoiding promotion of articles that specifically show the “potential dangers and consequences of climate change.”ⁱ A separate *Politico* article published on May 7, 2019 reports that USDA researchers fear professional retaliation for publishing independent scientific findings that do not align with the Administration’s political positions.ⁱⁱ

As you know, USDA research plays an invaluable role in empowering farmers by giving them the tools to make important business decisions and adapt their farming practices to face future challenges. Ignoring the link between climate change and extreme weather presents a direct threat to our national security, food security, and to the livelihoods of Illinois farmers and farmers throughout the country.

Farmers across the country are already suffering the consequences of climate change. I’ve spoken to farmers in my home district, the Illinois 14th, who are concerned that an early frost could threaten entire farm operations this year because of late planting and more unpredictable weather patterns. The very existence of multi-generational farms and an entire way of life for some families are at risk.

I believe that undermining public discourse on climate change by obfuscating research is dangerous. That is why I introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture Appropriations Bill which would prevent federal agencies like USDA from removing existing public information about climate change.

I therefore request that you provide a detailed plan to preserve and promote independent research within all branches of USDA. To avoid conflicts within your department, I also request a written response which clearly states USDA’s stance on climate change and its effects on agriculture in our country. I look forward to your response, and to working with you to ensure

America's farmers have the information they need to succeed as our society navigates the challenges posed by a changing climate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Underwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Underwood

ⁱ Helena Bottemiller Evich. "Agriculture Department buries studies showing dangers of climate change." *Politico*, June 23, 2019. (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/23/agriculture-department-climate-change-1376413>).

ⁱⁱ Ryan McCrimmon. "Economists flee Agriculture Dept. after feeling punished under Trump." *Politico*, May 7, 2019. (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/07/agriculture-economists-leave-trump-1307146>).