

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2018

Mr. Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear President Trump and Secretary Perdue:

As members of the Congressional Food Safety Caucus, we write to urge the Administration to submit a qualified nominee as Under Secretary for Food Safety and to emphasize the importance of this position. Food safety policies impact the lives of each and every American, and thus it is vitally important that the leadership void created by this vacancy be filled immediately.

The position of Under Secretary for Food Safety has now entered its fifth year of vacancy, making it one of the longest standing vacancies within the Executive Branch. As you know, the law requires that a presidential appointee, confirmed by the Senate, be chosen “from among individuals with specialized training or significant experience in food safety or public health programs.” We strongly believe the country would greatly benefit from having an individual with a science-based expertise serving as our nation’s top food safety official.

With the Administration proposing large scale changes in the area of food safety, this appointment could not come at a more welcomed or timely moment. These various changes – moving the U.S. Codex Office from the Food Safety and Inspection Service to the Trade and Foreign Affairs mission area, the proposed changes to the inspection of livestock slaughter, as well as the recent cooperative agreement between USDA and FDA on implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act – could all gain from the expertise and input of a qualified expert on food safety.

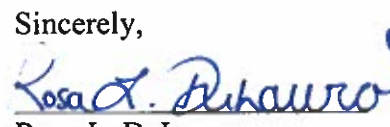
Last year, the Government Accountability Office placed the issue of federal oversight of food safety on its *High Risk List* because of “the fragmented federal food safety oversight system, which has caused inconsistent oversight, ineffective coordination, and inefficient use of

resources.”<sup>1</sup> Just as concerning, the GAO found that the amount of multistate foodborne illness outbreaks reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has increased over time. Today, around 48 million Americans are affected by foodborne illnesses per year, which results in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.<sup>2</sup>

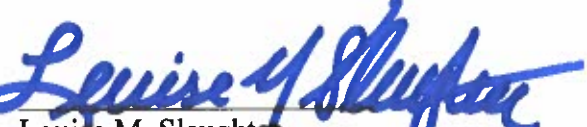
However, it is not just consumers who suffer from inadequate food safety standards. For years, USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) researchers have highlighted the impact that foodborne illness outbreaks and product recalls have on the agriculture and food industries. These impacts include declines in product consumption and prices – both of which directly reduce revenues of farmers and ranchers<sup>3</sup>. For example, agricultural economists from Kansas State University found that consumer demand for ground beef was significantly reduced by beef *E. coli* recalls<sup>4</sup>. Foodborne outbreaks and recalls have real impacts that affect the entire supply chain – from food retailers all the way back to the farm.

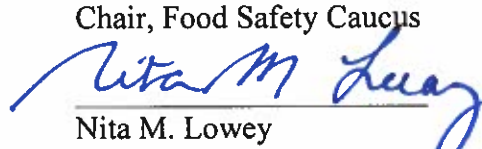
Without question, filling this vital leadership position will have a positive influence on the Department, as well as the country. We respectfully request a written response that outlines your timeline for nominating an Under Secretary for Food Safety and filling this long standing vacancy.


Sincerely,


  
Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress  
Chair, Food Safety Caucus

  
Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

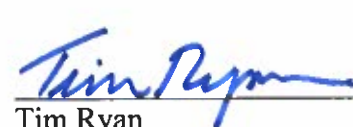
  
Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress

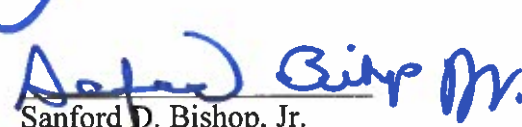
  
Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress

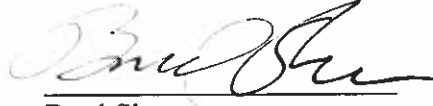
  
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress


  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

  
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

  
Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

  
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

<sup>1</sup> U.S Government Accountability Office, (February 2017). *Progress on Many High-Risk Areas, While Substantial Efforts Needed on Others*. [https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/improving\\_federal\\_oversight\\_food\\_safety/why\\_did\\_study](https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/improving_federal_oversight_food_safety/why_did_study).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/2011-foodborne-estimates.html>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. [https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45500/55537\\_err202.pdf?v=42332](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45500/55537_err202.pdf?v=42332).

<sup>4</sup> Shang, Xia and Glynn T. Tonsor, (May 2017). *Food safety recalls effects across meat products and regions*.