

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Rollins,

The United States is in the midst of its largest *Cyclospora* outbreak in history, sickening nearly 20,000 Americans, hospitalizing over 1,000 and killing at least two. Case totals are likely to continue to rise in the coming weeks.

A recent *Politico* story reported that the three research programs that represent nearly all of the *Cyclospora* research at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), all previously or currently underway at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in Maryland, are on hold or have been terminated. In the story, the Department blames Congress for terminating two of the three projects. What the Department fails to mention is that funding ended based on technical advice Congress received from USDA indicating that despite funding cuts, the researchers working on *Cyclospora* projects would continue to work at BARC and that USDA would retain their scientific expertise without ending all *Cyclospora*-related research.

The third project, which remains funded, has reportedly been halted because of the Department's overzealous drive to dismantle the Agricultural Research Service as part of its shortsighted reorganization effort of USDA, and in particular its ill-conceived drive to shutter the largest and most diversified agricultural research complex in the world, BARC. According to *Politico's* reporting, the scientists working on *Cyclospora* research at BARC have declined orders to relocate to a different facility in Iowa, and so the project remains on hold and there will be no dedicated USDA research staff to study *Cyclospora* as confirmed cases continue to rise.

As Congress continues to work towards a final funding agreement for FY 2027, Democrats stand ready to build on existing *Cyclospora* research to protect the American people's health and safety. Americans deserve to trust that the food they eat is safe. The Department can join us in doing its part by reversing its decision to dismantle *Cyclospora* research at BARC, something that is wholly within your power to do immediately.

During a record-breaking number of food safety outbreaks and the worst *Cyclospora* outbreak our country has ever experienced, USDA's ill-considered reorganization will only exacerbate the problem and leaves serious questions unresolved:

- 1) Can the Department confirm reporting that all staff currently working on *Cyclospora* research at BARC have declined to relocate to Iowa?
 - a. If so, have any new staff been hired to work on the third *Cyclospora* research project at its new proposed location?
- 2) How many other research projects will lose scientific staff who have declined or otherwise not finalized an agreement to relocate as a result of the reorganization and more specifically, the closure of BARC?
- 3) How will the Department ensure research progress at BARC remains "uninterrupted," in particular, the food safety research on *Cyclospora*?
- 4) Please share the Department's specific and detailed plan to relocate *Cyclospora* research, including where research will move to and whether receiving labs have capacity to continue BARC research, including appropriate lab space, equipment, and staff expertise.
- 5) Does USDA plan to transport highly pathogenic organisms across the country as a part of the reorganization, and if so, what precautions will be in place to ensure that these samples will remain contained and undamaged during relocation?

While the Administration continues to claim that the reorganization effort will not interrupt critical research programs, that is clearly not the case with *Cyclospora* research. Separately, the Agricultural Research Service has an annual appropriation of over \$1.8 billion. One major question remains; how many more critical research projects focused on strengthening food safety or protecting Americans health will be disrupted because of a reorganization that the Department has decided to carry out at full speed while declining to provide Congress with meaningful details?

Notably, since 2016, USDA has invested over \$170 million in BARC facility upgrades and repairs, including the completion of a \$32 million renovation of BARC's food safety lab in 2022. There is no better location to perform vital food safety research, especially on *Cyclospora*, and the proposal to decommission BARC will do nothing but disrupt this important work, endanger Americans' health and safety, and harm our national security.

Therefore, we request that USDA immediately cease its efforts to close BARC and halt its reorganization before it results in any more costly mistakes.

We look forward to a timely response.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



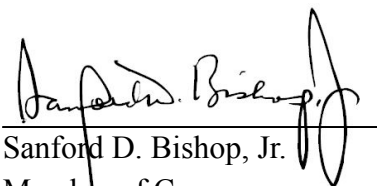
Angela D. Alsobrooks
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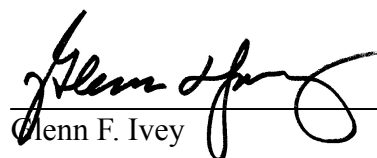
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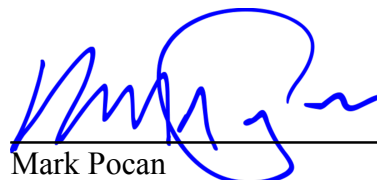
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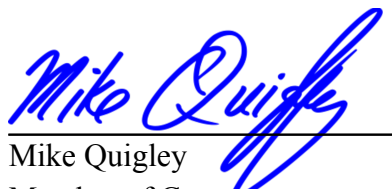
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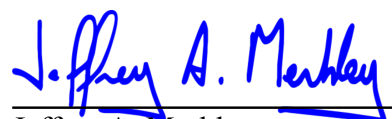


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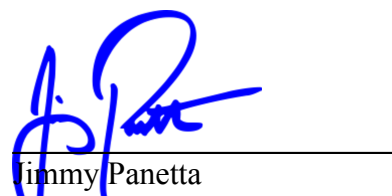

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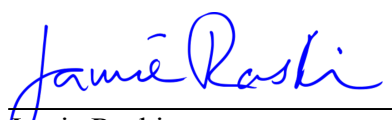

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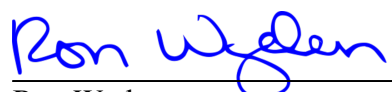

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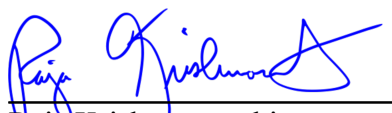

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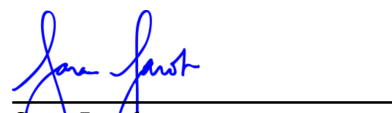

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