

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

April 9, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to follow up on our February 3, 2021, letter to Acting Secretary Shea, which has gone unanswered, outlining the urgent need to swiftly disburse the \$200 million that was included in the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act* to provide relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses affected by the pandemic.

While we were pleased to see the recent announcement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that timber harvesting and timber hauling provisions will be included along with other new programs under “USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers,” it is critical that you use every authority available to distribute this relief quickly to those who need it.

Many agricultural harvesters have endured a difficult year, but our nation’s loggers have experienced disproportionate financial losses compared to most other sectors, from cotton to Christmas trees. Those sectors have already received substantial direct relief, but timber harvesters and haulers have not. In Maine, it is estimated that the logging industry is down nearly 40 percent since the onset of the pandemic. In light of this reality, we would appreciate your consideration of the following:

- We understand that the U.S. Forest Service, at the request of the Farm Service Agency, has conducted an analysis of the industry to inform the parameters of the program. Please share this analysis with us.
- We urge you to consider establishing this program through a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. If that is not a viable route, please explain why it is not.
- If a NOFA process is not possible, we encourage you to advance the timber harvesting and timber hauling relief program separate from the broader USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. What authorities or options will you use to expedite this process?
- Is it possible to separate the rulemaking process for timber relief from other sectors that are eligible in order to fast track the disbursement of funds?

It has been three months since the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act* was signed into law. Each day that goes by without financial assistance poses

another threat to the survival of our timber industry and the rural communities it supports. For this reason, we hope that USDA will act soon to ensure that our loggers and logging businesses receive direct relief.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



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SUSAN M. COLLINS  
United States Senator



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ANGUS S. KING, JR.  
United States Senator



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CHELLIE PINGREE  
Member of Congress



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JARED GOLDEN  
Member of Congress