

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

March 20, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I write to share my concerns about USDA's delay in releasing already-contracted funds. Over the past several weeks, I have heard from my constituents, who are concerned about the future of USDA programs. Some businesses and farmers received grant award letters from USDA in the previous administration, only to later receive letters from USDA informing them that their grant funding is frozen due to USDA reviewing its programs. I have heard from farmers, landowners, loggers, natural resource businesses, and so many more constituents who have applied for USDA loans and have no clarity on when decisions will be available due to this agency review.

The timing of this funding is critical to farmers in Maine. Agriculture producers are purchasing seeds and products that they will plant in just a few months. Processing facilities need to order equipment to be available for the fall harvest. Local farm economies are also very fragile, and farmers have faced additional uncertainty due to fluctuating tariff policies. It is essential that farmers receive clarity that money they have planned for will be released. I urge you to finish the review of programs quickly, and to prioritize the release of funds that have already been authorized.

I have also heard from many of my constituents who are concerned with the termination of the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Cooperative Agreements and the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS). These programs supported local and regional food purchases for those in need while bolstering new markets for our producers. Food prices remain at record highs while our farmers continue to battle market and weather-related challenges.

I urge you to use your authorities as Secretary to ensure that food providers will continue to have access to healthy and affordable local food options while supporting farmers by bolstering markets, both domestic and abroad, to make sure that the cancellation of these programs do not cause undue hardship to those who were counting on the funding.

Thank you for taking the time to address this important matter. I appreciated your reversing USDA's pause on payments for research and extension awards to the University of Maine system, and I look forward to continuing to work together on behalf of Mainers who have

been affected by funding uncertainty. Please do not hesitate to contact me or have your staff contact [REDACTED] with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan M. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator