



**VERBAL TESTIMONY
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research**

RE: A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Horticulture and Urban Agriculture

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Submitted by:

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Good morning and thank you Chairwoman Plaskett and Ranking Member Baird for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Bruce Kettler and I serve as the Director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). I have over 30 years of agricultural leadership experience and knowledge of production agriculture, sales and agriculture supply businesses. Prior to joining ISDA, I spent 11 years at Beck's Hybrids and 17 years at Dow AgroSciences where I worked in a variety of roles including sales, marketing and public and industry relations.

In addition to my role as Director at ISDA, I also serve as the second vice president for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association that represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances American agriculture through policy, partnerships and public engagement.

As we begin today's hearing, I would first like to recognize the importance of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). The 2018 Farm Bill was a unified, bipartisan bill that secured a commitment to American farmers and ranchers, while protecting the critical food and nutritional assistance programs for those who need it most.

As I interact with farmers, our agricultural supply businesses and industry leaders, the word "uncertainty" keeps coming up time and time again. It has replaced the word "resiliency" often used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Uncertainty" sends chills down the spine of farmers as they attempt to make critical business decisions. "Uncertainty" impacts families in need of assistance with putting food on the table. "Uncertainty" disrupts the food supply chain as we witnessed throughout the pandemic.

As the House Committee on Agriculture begins hearings for the 2023 Farm Bill, it is vital Congress provides "Certainty" by delivering a forward-looking, fully funded Farm Bill, on time. If the pandemic and the recent events unfolding in Ukraine have taught us anything, it is that this Farm Bill, and all future Farm Bills are an issue of national security.

State departments of agriculture play a critical role in food and agriculture policy in the United States. As regulators and advocates for the agriculture industry,

NASDA's voice is unique in the nexus between the states and the federal government. NASDA members lead in areas ranging from food safety to resource conservation and promote agriculture locally and abroad.

As the state regulators and co-regulators with federal agencies, NASDA members are actively involved in ensuring the safety of an abundant food supply; protecting animal and plant health, implementing conservation programs; and promoting the vitality of rural communities.

In a time of increased risk and challenges for the agriculture industry, federal legislation and regulations should work to promote economic stability while guaranteeing a safe and accessible food supply. This work must be a joint venture between the states and federal government. Looking forward, NASDA calls for a renewed commitment to Cooperative Federalism. It is critical this partnership between states and the federal government recognizes and enhances the role of states in federal policymaking.

In my written testimony submitted to the Committee, there are additional comments about Specialty Crop Block Grants, Invasive Species, the Food Safety Modernization Act and Food Safety Education, the FIFRA Interagency Working Group, Hemp, Urban Agriculture and the Local Agriculture Market Program.

Agricultural producers, the rural economy, and communities of every size rely upon a forward-looking, and fully funded Farm Bill. The Farm Bill must provide

farmers and ranchers with a reliable safety net. The Farm Bill must provide consumers access to the safest and most affordable food supply. The next Farm Bill must remain unified – securing a commitment to American agriculture and the critical food and nutritional assistance programs for those who need it most. The Farm Bill is an issue of national security.

Thank you for the invitation to address the subcommittee today and I look forward to answering your questions.