

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Senate

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Senate

Dear Chair Murray and Vice Chair Collins,

We, the undersigned groups, are writing to express our support for providing state and local food safety regulatory agencies with fiscal certainty and security by specifying a line item within the fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriation for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

As you are likely aware, FDA is currently restructuring its human foods program to streamline operations and better fulfill its mission of food safety protection. While many of the proposed changes will strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure the safety of our food supply, Congress can help modernize the human foods program by bringing clarity and certainty to the agency's budget.

State and local food safety agencies frequently collaborate with FDA while conducting food processing, produce, and retail inspections. They also perform vital roles of education and outreach for the necessary prevention-focused infrastructure of an integrated food safety system that is required by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). They assist in identifying potential illness outbreaks, investigating illnesses, and effectuating product removals through recalls. Further, FDA often requests the use of state authority to expedite product recalls and removals, closures, embargoes, and similar actions. In total, states conduct 50 percent of human food processing inspections reported as completed by FDA, 70 percent of animal food processing inspections reported as completed by FDA, over 90 percent of produce safety inspections under the FDA produce safety program, and 100 percent of retail food inspections – all at a lower cost to taxpayers than if FDA were to do this work itself. Further, state laboratories conduct a significant portion of all food sampling used for compliance verification and FDA-related food research.

Despite the critical role played by state and local food agencies, they frequently lack the budgetary certainty needed to operate effectively, which leads to difficulties in hiring and maintaining an adequate number of properly trained staff. Although increased funding provided since the passage of the FSMA has significantly enhanced state and local agencies' capacity to fulfill their food safety mission, FDA often uses funds meant for state and local agencies to pursue other priorities while giving little to no warning to impacted agencies.

In the FY25 budget proposal, FDA has proposed cutting resources to state and local programs by \$34 million from over \$117 million to \$83 million. This will decimate the ability of state and local programs to continue this level of partnership and greatly reduce the activity of food protection provided by these front-line programs.

A consistent and predictable funding mechanism for state and local programs is needed. As such, we urge you to include a line item detailing specific funding for state and local food safety issues in your budget allocation for FDA to ensure state and local programs have the budgetary certainty needed to carry out their work.

Sincerely,

Donna Garren, Executive Vice President of Science and Policy, American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI)

Austin Therrell, Executive Director, Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)

Steve Mandernach, Executive Director, Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO)

Peter Kyriacopoulos, Chief Policy Officer, Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)

Jeffrey O. Ekoma, Senior Director, Government Affairs, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

Sarah Sorscher, Director of Regulatory Affairs, Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)

David McSwane, Executive Director, Conference for Food Protection (CFP)

Sarah Gallo, Vice President of Product Policy, Consumer Brands Association (CBA)

Thomas Gremillion, Director of Food Policy, Consumer Federation of America

Brian Ronholm, Director of Food Policy, Consumer Reports

Hilary Thesmar, Chief Science Officer and SVP Food Safety, FMI – The Food Industry Association

Barbara Kowalcyk, Associate Professor and Director of Food Policy Institute, George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health

Roberta Wagner, Senior Vice President of Regulatory and Scientific Affairs, International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA)

Catherine Burns, CEO, International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA)

Keith Skiles, Executive Director, Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC)

Ted McKinney, CEO, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)

Casey M. McCue, Chair, National Conference of Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS)

Doug Farquhar, Director of Government Affairs, National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

Dana Brooks, President and CEO, Pet Food Institute

Mitzi D. Baum, CEO, Stop Foodborne Illness

De Ann Davis, Sr. Vice President of Science, Western Growers Association