United States Senate

May 31, 2022

The Honorable Martin Oberman
Chairman, Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Chairman Oberman:

We write to express our concerns regarding reduced deliveries of feed grain to California's livestock and poultry operations, and the risk that disrupted delivery services pose to food security and animal health and welfare. We urge the Surface Transportation Board to address recent freight rail service disruptions and increased freight rail costs and support a return to consistent, on-time rail services for critical poultry and livestock feed.

California's livestock and livestock products are a $12.1 billion industry, with dairy products leading the nation in total milk production of 41.3 billion pounds. Poultry and other livestock operations are also top agriculture industries in the state, with 130 million poultry, 1.7 million dairy cows, and 650,000 heads of beef cattle. However, California is heavily reliant on the North American rail systems to fulfill our feed supply needs. Chickens are particularly sensitive to deviations in their diet or feeding schedule that may be caused by delayed feed deliveries. Current rail service disruptions threaten California's agriculture economy, including domestic meat, milk, and egg supplies, as well as food security and animal health and welfare.

It is our understanding that California Department of Food and Agriculture Feed licensees are facing three-week delays in receiving unit trains, a stark contrast to the three-to-four-day delivery schedule they have long relied upon. The California feed industry paid tens of millions of dollars in fuel surcharges and demurrage fees in March alone and is anticipating these costs to continue to rise in the coming months. California feed manufacturers and customers are paying higher fees for diminished rail services.

We urge you to use your existing authorities to address recent feed delivery delays and prevent disruptions to California's economy, our nation's food security, and animal health and welfare. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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