

03.25.20

Ranking Member Stabenow Statement on the Third Bipartisan Coronavirus Package

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, today issued the following statement after the Senate passage of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, which includes relief for farmers, consumers, and rural communities.

“This health care crisis is affecting every family across the country. The relief package will provide stability for our farmers and ensure the American people have a safe and stable food supply. Our bipartisan agreement includes targeted assistance to farmers who are experiencing severe financial losses during the pandemic, including fruit and vegetable growers, dairy farmers, and local food producers.

“The bill ensures that our small towns and rural communities aren’t left behind. It provides telemedicine resources, critical support for rural hospitals, and loans to help small businesses stay afloat.

“While this bill contains critical relief, I am deeply disappointed that including additional food assistance for children, families, and seniors did not have bipartisan support. I will continue to fight to get families the help they need during this crisis.”

The *CARES Act* provides:

Relief for Farmers and Ranchers

- \$9.5 billion dedicated disaster fund to help farmers who are experiencing financial losses from the coronavirus crisis, including targeted support for fruit and vegetable growers, dairy and livestock farmers, and local food producers, who have been shorted from receiving emergency assistance in the past.
- \$14 billion to fund the Farm Bill’s farm safety net through the Commodity

Credit Corporation.

- **Eligibility for farmers and agricultural and rural businesses to receive up to \$10 million in small business interruption loans from eligible lenders, including Farm Credit institutions, through the Small Business Administration. Repayment forgiveness will be provided for funds used for payroll, rent or mortgage, and utility bills.**
- **\$3 million to increase capacity at the USDA Farm Service Agency to meet increased demand from farmers affected by the coronavirus crisis.**

Assistance for Small Towns and Rural Communities

- **\$1 billion available in guaranteed loans to help rural businesses weather the economic downturn.**
- **\$100 billion to hospitals, health care providers, and facilities, including those in rural areas.**
- **\$25 million for telemedicine tools to help rural patients access medical care no matter where they live.**
- **\$100 million for high speed internet expansion in small towns and rural communities.**
- **Over \$70 million to help the U.S. Forest Service serve rural communities and reduce the spread of coronavirus through personal protective equipment for first responders and cleaning of facilities.**

Protections for Consumers and the Food Supply

- **\$55 million for inspection and quarantine at our borders to protect against invasive pests and animal disease.**
- **\$33 million for overtime and temporary food safety inspectors to protect America's food supply at meat processing plants.**
- **\$45 million to ensure quality produce and meat reaches grocery stores through increased support for the Agricultural Marketing Service.**
- **\$1.5 million to expedite EPA approvals of disinfectants needed to control the spread of coronavirus.**

Food Access for Families

- **\$15.8 billion to fund food assistance changes made in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Republicans and the Trump Administration blocked additional funding to expand benefits for children, families, and seniors.**

- **\$9 billion to fund child nutrition improvements made in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.**
- **\$450 million to provide food banks with additional resources for food and distribution.**
- **\$100 million for food distribution in Tribal communities to provide facility improvements, equipment upgrades, and food purchases.**

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