

BARRY MOORE
2ND DISTRICT, ALABAMA

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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October 22, 2021

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
212A Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Secretary,

Today, I write to express my strong opposition to your recent decision to require all Farm Service Agency (FSA) State and County Committee Members and Advisors receive the COVID-19 vaccination, or face termination.

As you are well aware, FSA State and County Committees provide valuable insight and expertise on the many issues facing our agriculture communities across the United States. From local outreach to monitoring program changes and communicating those changes to our farmers, these members serve as an integral part of FSA's operations. During a time when so many policy changes – especially those impacting agriculture – are occurring far from those most often impacted, FSA's leaders and public servants serve as strong advocates for their communities and their industry.

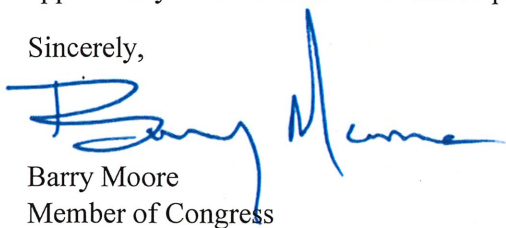
Unfortunately, on September 22, 2021, these public servants received a memorandum outlining the new vaccination requirement under President Biden's Executive Order 14043. In short, members must take the vaccine or face termination. At the end of a pandemic that has greatly impacted our farmers, this is not the time to be mandating personal health decisions for FSA's State and County Committee members – particularly individuals who voluntarily offer their time and expertise in service to their communities.

In recent weeks, I have heard from many members of our agriculture community who will likely step aside and resign rather than accept this intrusive mandate. Involvement with these committees is largely voluntary, and members only meet periodically. The individuals involved do not pose a high risk of transmitting COVID-19, and this unnecessary requirement is likely to cause a sudden shortage of expertise and practical experience at the state and county levels.

While I was encouraged to hear your recent testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture regarding your desire to keep local FSA offices fully operational and your commitment to providing religious and medical exemptions for employees, I ask that you further alter your position to either exempt FSA State and County Committee Members and Advisors or offer ample accommodations that will allow members to continue their service while unvaccinated.

I am confident that we share a commitment to the wellbeing and success of our agricultural community, and I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Barry Moore
Member of Congress