

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 3, 2014

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Donovan,

We write to urge you to review and release pathogen standards for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in poultry products as quickly as possible. We strongly encouraged the Department of Agriculture to set these standards at a level that will lead to a significant reduction in the number of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* foodborne infections that occur each year in the United States. It is our understanding that the Department submitted these standards to your office in October.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* cause nearly two million foodborne illnesses, 27,500 hospitalizations, and over 450 deaths each year. Further, the CDC reports our food safety system has not reduced the number of illnesses caused by *Salmonella* since 2000. The CDC also found that as of 2013, *Campylobacter* illnesses have increased by 13 percent compared with the baseline number of annual illnesses that occurred between 2006 and 2008.

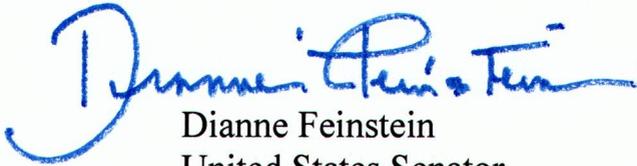
These alarming rates of foodborne illness are caused, in part, by the unacceptably high levels of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* contamination on poultry products. Routine testing done in 2013 by the Department found that over 40 percent of ground chicken tested positive for *Salmonella*. A national study completed by the Department in 2012 found that 26 percent of poultry parts tested positive for *Salmonella* and 21 percent tested positive for *Campylobacter*. As of today, there are no standards for poultry parts and the standards for ground poultry have not been updated since 1996.

Foster Farms, a large poultry producer based in California, was linked to a recent outbreak of *Salmonella* Heidelberg that caused 634 illnesses across 29 states. Since the outbreak concluded earlier this year, Foster Farms reports that it has consistently reduced the rates of *Salmonella* contamination of poultry parts to below 5 percent. We believe this provides ample evidence that the poultry

industry is capable of significantly reducing the current rates of pathogen contamination of poultry products.

Thank you for your attention to our request on this important public health matter. We eagerly await the release of new *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* standards for poultry products.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

DF/tc