

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
Chairman  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
S128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
S128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Blunt:

As the Subcommittee considers priorities for its Fiscal Year 2012 Agriculture and Related Agencies Appropriations legislation, we urge you to provide full funding for the food safety system through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). An adequately funded food safety system benefits both consumers and industry by preventing food borne illness and limiting costly recalls. The critical food safety activities at these two agencies should be funded at the levels outlined in the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request.

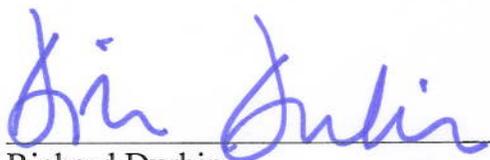
In an effort to address problems in our food safety system and decrease foodborne illness, the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress passed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act – the most comprehensive reform of food safety law in 70 years. The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act authorized additional resources, inspections, and new authorities to improve consumer safety by focusing on preventing foodborne illness instead of responding to outbreaks. Without adequate funding, however, the FDA will not be able to adequately implement the changes required by the new law and it will continue operating a food safety system that is widely recognized as outdated and reactive.

FSIS has long safeguarded our meat, poultry, and processed egg products. The FSIS budget funds the daily activities of the inspectors working in food facilities under USDA jurisdiction. These facilities cannot lawfully operate unless an FSIS inspector is onsite to verify that the facility's operations are in compliance with USDA requirements. A significant decrease in the FSIS budget would jeopardize FSIS's ability to maintain the inspectors needed to keep these food facilities open for business. Ill-advised budget cuts at FSIS would hurt current business operations and jobs at slaughter facilities and, more importantly, undermine the safety of the meat and poultry produced at these facilities.

Americans spend more than \$1 trillion on food each year. Continued outbreaks of foodborne illness have compromised the public's faith in the ability of industry and government to ensure the safety of food in the marketplace. The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress made groundbreaking improvements to our food safety system. Now, we need to provide sufficient funding to implement those changes in an effective and efficient manner.

Thank you for considering this request to fund these necessary food safety programs.

Sincerely,



Richard Durbin  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Tom Harkin  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator