

KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

NEW YORK

SENATOR

RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
SUITE 478  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205  
202-224-4451

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS  
AGRICULTURE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

May 2, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington DC 20230

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington DC 20250

Dear Secretary Pritzker and Secretary Vilsack,

I was very pleased with the President's announcement earlier this year that the White House Rural Council is launching a "Made in Rural America" export and investment initiative, which will include a series of regional forums to promote the importance of growing rural exports as well as other critical actions to assist rural companies in accessing the over 95 percent of consumers that live beyond the borders of the United States. As a member of the President's Export Council and the Senate Agriculture Committee, I share in the commitment of expanding our nation's exports to ensure our economic success, particularly in our rural areas, and welcome the opportunity to co-host a "Made in Rural America" regional forum in New York.

Home to 17 percent of the country's population, rural America plays a central role in our nation's competitiveness, including adding to the nation's strength in exporting. Agriculture, which has traditionally been a vital contributor to the rural economy, continues to see growth and is highly competitive in international markets, with total agricultural exports from the U.S. totaling about \$140 billion in 2013. Additionally, as both domestic and international companies seek locations with low costs and strong workforces, rural communities have increasingly seen opportunities in other sectors like manufacturing and high-tech services, which are significant contributors to the nation's exports.

New York, as one of the nation's top exporting states with an estimated \$84 billion in overseas business in 2013, has experienced similar positive trends. In 2011, over 41,000 companies exported from New York locations, of which close to 40,000 were small and medium-sized businesses. In particular, manufacturing companies are some of the top exporters for New York, with nearly one quarter of all manufacturing workers, including many in rural communities in New York, depending on exports for their jobs. Such export-related manufacturing jobs make up close to 10 percent of all private sector employment in New York. Further, jobs in export industries account for nearly one in 10 jobs in the upstate New York regions of Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse. Also, New York is the third highest exporter of dairy products in the nation and among the top ten states in exporting fruit and vegetable products. Initiatives like "Made in Rural America" are integral in supporting further export growth, especially in assisting our small and midsize rural companies that may not have considered the potential of accessing untapped markets overseas.

New York, as a major U.S. exporting state, is poised to contribute to and benefit from this initiative, and would serve as an excellent venue for hosting one of the proposed regional forums. New York can not only showcase exporting success, but also has actively engaged in regional economic development efforts that promote exporting as central to economic success, further indicating the state's potential for encouraging innovation, information exchange and partnership with states throughout both the Appalachian and Northeast regions of the country. Further, work done by New York entities like the Cornell Cooperative Extension has focused on assisting rural businesses in maximizing agricultural and food exports, offering a model for statewide and regional efforts in boosting overseas sales for rural companies.

I once again urge you to consider New York as a host state for one of the "Made in Rural America" forums. Please consider me and my office close partners in implementing this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator