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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

February 26, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I was pleased to see USDA's announcement yesterday regarding the new investment in pollinator health. Pollinating bees are critical for the production of \$15 billion worth of fruits, vegetables and seeds, an essential part of our growing agricultural economy. While this year's \$3 million will be invested in five Midwestern states, I urge you to expand this important program next year to the Northeast including New York State.

New York apple growers rely heavily on the honey bee pollinator to produce their apples. Last year, New York bee keepers lost on average 30% of their hives. Apple trees require two to three hives per acre to pollinate, so New York urgently needs USDA's pollinator health assistance to avoid losses to our apple production. Pollination services add an estimated \$300,000,000 value to a 4.4 billion dollar agriculture income in New York in 2012.

USDA's technical and financial assistance for all interested New York fruit and vegetable farmers would play an important role in the health of our bees, and save our crops from potential harm. New York state is home to some of the best fruits and vegetables in the world, some of which depend on pollinators to survive. New York farmers who grow apples, blueberries, cherries, squash and other fruits and vegetables would benefit greatly from this assistance from USDA. Without this assistance, consequences to our state agricultural economy could be dire.

New York farmers are role model environmental stewards, and greatly benefit from the involvement of USDA in their advancement of farming techniques and environmental practices. I look forward to working together to implement this pollinator health initiative in New York State.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator