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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

December 3, 2014

The Honorable Earl F. Gohl
ARC Federal Co-Chair
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009-1068

Dear Federal Co-Chair Gohl,

I write in support of the application submitted by SUNY Cobleskill for funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). This funding will help SUNY Cobleskill develop an undergraduate Agriculture Retail Facility project, which will allow students to acquire critical skills in producing and marketing value-added products that will be sold on campus.

SUNY Cobleskill is located in Schoharie County in the Southern Tier East (STE) region of New York State. Since 1916, SUNY Cobleskill's School of Agriculture and Natural Resources has offered one of the most dynamic agricultural programs in the United States. The school provides hands-on learning through a number of agricultural programs, which include a working farm, 14 greenhouses, a 10-acre arboretum, a 40,000-gallon fish hatchery, a 200-cow contemporary freestall dairy, a USDA-inspected meat laboratory, and a fully-equipped agricultural engineering technology facility. The school's emphasis on agricultural education and initiatives has been critical to bolstering the agriculture economy in the STE region of the state and beyond. SUNY Cobleskill's proposed Agriculture Retail Facility project will allow students to have direct experience working with local farmers and learning how to successfully develop value-added products for the local marketplace.

The requested funding will be used to support a broad initiative to create an undergraduate program in Food Systems and Technology, through which students will work with local farmers and learn how to successfully produce and market value-added products, which will be sold on SUNY Cobleskill's campus. A 19th century carriage barn will be refurbished to house this facility. ARC's investment would offer critical support for hiring start-up staffing, specifically a full-time manager of the ag-retail space, as well as assist with supply costs, including freezers, display coolers, floor displays, and other equipment necessary for sale and promotion of value-added products. Ultimately, this program will allow students to have significant hands-on experience and opportunities for critical thinking as they apply their knowledge of agricultural production to the broader marketplace of New York State, further growing opportunities to bring more locally-grown products to market.

I ask that you please give this application your full consideration. If you have any questions, or desire further information, please do not hesitate to contact my staff member Andrew Usyk at (202) 224-4451.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirsten Gillibrand". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "K".

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator