

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

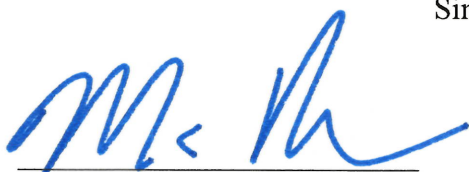
We want to thank the Department for working with the state to ensure that all Floridians in need will be able to access nutritious foods as they work to recover their livelihoods and communities in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. The quick and effective rollout of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) disaster nutrition assistance is critical to sustaining life, just as USDA's other recovery programs are essential to allow farmers, ranchers, and timber harvesters to inject dollars back into the local economy to accelerate recovery.

Many of the counties, crops, and timberlands in the Panhandle were impacted in 2017 by Hurricane Irma, and have subsequently been decimated by Hurricane Michael. More than ever, folks in these communities need the reassurance that their government has not forgotten them. Following Hurricane Irma, you toured some of the hardest hit disaster areas and met with citrus producers to learn from their unique situation. We are also aware that you have already visited areas in Georgia to witness Hurricane Michael's devastating impacts on the state's agricultural operations. As such, we welcome you, Under Secretary Bill Northey, and Under Secretary James Hubbard, to tour the devastation in Florida and learn from impacted stakeholders.

Agricultural and silvicultural production are among the main drivers of economic opportunity across the inland regions of Florida's Panhandle. If many of these already distressed communities are to survive, they will require uniquely tailored recovery support from USDA. We urge you to continue USDA's important recovery work with state and local partners, and to demonstrate the Department's commitment to Panhandle farmers, ranchers, and timber harvesters. We look forward to working with you and your under secretaries.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

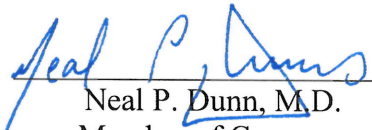
Sincerely,




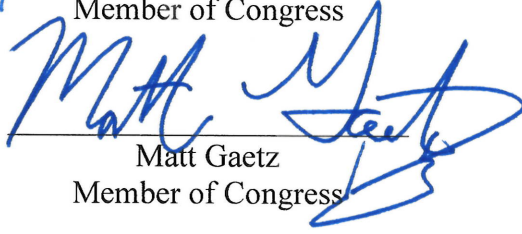
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator


Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress


Al Lawson
Member of Congress


Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress