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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 15, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing in response to troubling reports that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) inspectors are not reporting to work at the Tyson Foods Pork Plant in Madison, Nebraska. Let me be clear, this is unacceptable and must be remedied immediately.

FSIS inspectors are essential employees; they are integral to ensuring consumer safety and disease prevention. Importantly, these inspectors are required for the operation of meat and poultry processing facilities across the country. Without FSIS inspectors, the plant shuts down and the meat and poultry supply chain stops. Such a disruption would severely impact food access, product cost and livestock production.

The pork industry is a central component to Nebraska's agricultural and economic sectors. Nebraska is a top-ten state in the nation for pork production. We finish over 5.43 million hogs per year, returning over \$1.06 billion in cash receipts. As of 2021, Nebraska's pork industry and related activity supported 17,866 jobs and more than \$978 million in personal income.

The safety of Nebraskans is my top priority and I understand the importance of taking precautions in light of challenging weather. However, state and communities in the area are taking the necessary steps to allow essential employees to return to work. Furthermore, clear protocols must be executed that ensure the operational integrity of our nation's meat and poultry production.

If our communities can show up to work, the USDA can too. Our pork producers are ready and waiting; our plant wants to operate; the USDA must step up to the plate and fulfill its mission to serve rural America.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Flood". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "M" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike Flood
Member of Congress