OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

October 30, 2026

THE HONORABLE CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

Thank you for your September 22, 2026, letter, cosigned by your colleagues, regarding the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service and its impacts to Baltimore Urban Field Station employees.

On September 3, 2026, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation, all while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the Agency's critical work. The announcement proposes to close the Baltimore Urban Field Station and reassign employees within their current commuting area to the George Washington Carver Center located 24 miles away in Beltsville, Maryland. The Baltimore Urban Field Station currently hosts only 14 Forest Service employees and costs $129,637 annually to lease, which is not economically viable when we have an opportunity to consolidate our footprint in Maryland.

These decisions are about right-sizing our facility footprint, not jobs or research programs.

On October 13, 2026, in *American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, et al. v. United States Department of Agriculture*, Case No. 26-cv-09976-VC (N.D. Calif.), the Court ordered that the injunction on the USDA Reorganization does not enjoin defendants from "relocating or reassigning USDA employees currently located within the National Capital Region to other local offices or locations also located within the National Capital Region, or closing offices, programs, or facilities in the National Capital Region from which all employees have been relocated or reassigned to other local offices or locations within the National Capital Region." The district court has therefore permitted this consolidation to continue.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have additional questions, please have a member of your staff contact USDA's Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095 or ocr@usda.gov. We sent a copy of this letter to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

Stephen Alexander Vaden
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture