

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 17, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write concerning reports from USDA employees affected by the proposed relocation of the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and who have been denied extensions to the July 15<sup>th</sup> deadline to accept or decline reassignment to the Kansas City Region.

As you are aware, your agency gave its employees just 33 days to decide whether they would relocate out of the Washington D.C. area to the newly selected location of the Kansas City Region. Employees were notified on June 13<sup>th</sup> that they were required to accept relocation or decline the reassignment by July 15<sup>th</sup>. Employees declining reassignment and who were not retirement eligible would face consequences up to losing their jobs.

We have heard from numerous federal workers who have requested personal extensions to this July 15<sup>th</sup> deadline, yet none has been approved. One such extension request would allow a current employee undergoing chemotherapy to continue their treatment with their trusted team of physicians. They now face the unconscionable decision of having to choose between continuing treatment with their physician while potentially losing their job and health insurance benefits or relocate to an entirely new city and attempt to find a team of specialist physicians to provide treatment. Another extension was requested from an employee who is undergoing treatment for multiple sclerosis, which also requires comprehensive care from physicians. These are just two examples of the personal hardship that your decision to accelerate the ERS and NIFA relocation is causing.

To that end, we ask you to answer the following questions by Monday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>:

- How many requests for extensions to the July 15<sup>th</sup> deadline were received by your office?
- How many requests were approved by your office?
- How many requests were denied by your office?
- How many requests are still outstanding?
- What is the process for reviewing and deciding on extension requests?
- How many requests for extensions were submitted relating to established care for serious medical conditions?

- What benefits, if any, are you providing to employees with serious medical conditions and who choose to not accept reassignment?
- What process do employees have to appeal a decision to deny a request for an extension?
  - What is an employee's status during this appeal process?

Although we remain strongly opposed to the decision to relocate ERS and NIFA, we ask that you consider the impacts it is having on federal workers, their health, and their families, and that you do all you can to mitigate the extreme hardships now placed upon them. With over 500 federal employees affected by this decision, we thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.

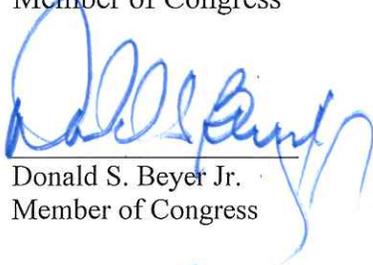
Sincerely,



Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Anthony Brown  
Member of Congress