

October 27, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers,
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room H-305
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran,
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey,
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations, Minority
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski,
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations, Minority
The Capitol, Room S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cochran and Ranking Member Lowey and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

As consumer and public health organizations working to improve our nation's food safety, we are writing to commend you for your continued commitment to improving the safety of our food supply. We respectfully ask you to remain steadfast on this path as you continue to consider Food and Drug Administration (FDA) funding for FY2016.

We are encouraged by the spirit of cooperation shown by both you and your staff to ensure that your committees are making critical investments in FDA's food safety budget during the regular appropriations process. We remain hopeful, however, that you will have the opportunity to do more.

This year is a crucial time for the regulators and the food industry alike. As the most important of FDA Food Safety Modernization Act's (FSMA) regulations continue to be finalized, the agency will need to retrain its inspectors, expand international regulatory activities, and build upon existing training and technical assistance programs. As you know, the task of implementing such an overhaul requires a substantial investment to get the job done, as reflected in the \$109.5 million requested by the President for FY2016. Additionally, without full funding, FDA's enhanced partnerships with state and local regulators may be delayed – limiting growers' and food processors' ability to work with trusted regulators with the deepest knowledge of their day-to-day operations.

Americans strongly support your efforts to strengthen our food safety system because the public health burden affects us all. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that contaminated food causes 48 million foodborne illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and as many as 3,000 deaths nationwide every year. An ongoing outbreak linked to *Salmonella*-contaminated imported cucumbers serves as one example. To date, more than 750 people have been sickened across 35 states, including 150 hospitalizations and 4 deaths. These preventable illnesses inflict economic costs estimated to total as much as \$70 billion each year.

Every year since FSMA became law, your shared commitment to food safety has proven the durability and bipartisanship of Congressional support for this issue. If you are successful in providing FDA with the resources it needs, you will be doing more than simply funding an important modernization of our nation's food safety system. In appropriating \$109.5 million for FSMA implementation, you will be strengthening consumer confidence in our growers and processors, providing regulatory certainty and creating a level global playing field for the American agriculture industry, and most importantly, making our food supply safer for American families.

Sincerely,

Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Consumer Federation of America

Consumers Union

Environmental Defense Fund

Food & Water Watch

National Consumers League

The Pew Charitable Trusts

STOP Foodborne Illness

(cc: House Speaker Boehner, Senate Majority Leader McConnell, House Democratic Leader Pelosi, Senate Democratic Leader Reid)