

May 10, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

The undersigned organizations write today in response to recent mischaracterizations about S. 557 and H.R. 1249, the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act. You may be aware of our [recent letter](#) supporting the OFF Act, signed by 131 organizations representing a diverse coalition of stakeholders, including hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers who pay into checkoff programs.

The OFF Act does nothing to impair the ability of commodity checkoffs to fulfill their intended purpose of promoting specific commodities. However, it does establish basic financial accountability and transparency for the over \$850 million dollars in government-mandated assessments collected from farmers and ranchers. Currently, there is almost no publicly available expenditure and budget information.

It is essential to clarify that some of the organizations calling themselves the “Trade Associations” in a recent letter opposing these common-sense reforms receive checkoff funds, including the American Farm Bureau Federation (awarded at least \$900,000 for FY23) and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (awarded \$25,720,000 for FY23).¹ Other Trade Associations share staff with their industry’s commodity national checkoff board, like the National Sorghum Board and the National Sorghum Producers. Most of the commodity checkoff boards do not disclose who receives their funds nor do most of the Trade Associations openly provide to the public where their money comes from nor who their staff members are.

¹ <https://www.beefboard.org/2022/09/15/beef-promotion-operating-committee-approves-fiscal-year-2023-checkoff-plan-of-work/>

The OFF Act is specifically designed to remedy this lack of information and accountability. Every farmer and rancher who is mandated to pay into the checkoff programs deserves no less than to know where their money is being spent and that it is properly accounted for.

We sincerely appreciate your dedication to America's farmers and ranchers and urge you to include the OFF Act in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Thank you,

American Agriculture Movement
American Economic Liberties Project
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
American Sustainable Business Network
Animals Are Sentient Beings Inc
Attorneys for Animals, Inc.
Buckeye Quality Beef Association
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
Dakota Resource Council
Empire Ranch, Inc.
Faiths for Safe Water
Farm Action Fund
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Food & Water Watch
Food System Innovations
Four Paws USA
FreedomWorks
Government Information Watch
Hometown Credit Union
HOPE for Small Farm Sustainability
Independent Beef Association of ND
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Iowa Farmers Union
Iowa Stock Growers Association
Kansas Cattlemen's Association
Land Stewardship Project
Mercy for Animals

Michigan Farmers Union
Missouri Farmers Union
Montana Farmers Union
National Dairy Producers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
Nebraska Farmers Union
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
New England Farmers Union
NOFA NH
NOK Vino
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Oglala Sioux Livestock and Landowners Association
Open Markets Institute
Organization for Competitive Markets
P Street
Public Citizen
Public Justice Food Project
R-CALF USA
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA
Rural Coalition
Slow Food Houston
Slow Food USA
Slow Food UW
Southern Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Southern Colorado Livestock Association
Stevens County Cattlemen's Association
Western Organization of Resource Councils
Wisconsin Farmers Union