

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2019

The Honorable Bill Northey
Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Under Secretary Northey:

Consistent rain and wet weather have created challenging planting conditions for farmers across Michigan this spring. We urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide flexibility and equitable treatment for Michigan farmers who have had to delay planting their crops.

As of April, we've seen the wettest 12-month period on record in the continental United States. Like other parts of the Midwest, large swaths of Michigan's grain production areas have seen precipitation measurements at double their normal rates. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Great Lakes Region, grain planting in Michigan has approached the slowest pace on record due to the relentless rain that we've seen. As agronomists have indicated, the unplanted acres are a problem—but even the crops that have been planted may see stunted growth or may require replanting. To add to the confluence of unfortunate events, feed and forage are harder to come by.

Increased flexibility for the utilization of prevented plant acres should fairly account for weather and climate variance across disparate geographic regions, which is why we encourage you to help ensure this planting season is not a total loss by providing increased flexibility under Federal Crop Insurance rules for utilizing forage and cover crops on prevented plant acres.

Additionally, Congress recently passed and the President signed a \$19.1 billion disaster aid bill to help Americans across the country—including farmers hit by catastrophic storms. As the USDA carries out the relief authorized to address flooding in this act, we encourage you to avoid inequities for Americans that have suffered from extreme weather by ensuring that any definition of flooding covers all instances of excessive moisture. Whether the excessive moisture and prevented planting is directly caused by a river leaving its banks, more localized stream flooding, or ponding of rainfall or snowmelt, the challenges faced by the farmers are the same and each of them should be eligible for aid in addition to the underlying Federal Crop Insurance.

Thank you for your continued efforts and please do not hesitate to contact our offices should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Gary C. Peters and Debbie Stabenow in blue ink. Gary C. Peters' signature is on the left, and Debbie Stabenow's signature is on the right.

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator