

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

Thank you for the commitment you made at the April 22, 2026 Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee hearing to quickly rehire critical staff positions that remain vacant at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in the Pacific Northwest. These vacancies threaten agricultural research that strengthens the nation's food security, bolsters rural economies, and supports farmers, fishermen, and ranchers. We appreciate your willingness to work with Congress to expeditiously fill these vacant positions that provide vital support to the nation's agricultural community.

The Pacific Northwest and USDA-ARS have successfully partnered for over 50 years to advance innovative agricultural science and environmental resilience. The agency's dedicated ARS scientists, technicians, and support staff collaborate with regional partners to find solutions that combat pests and diseases, improve crop yields, strengthen coastal ecosystems, fight soil erosion and wildfires, and adapt practices to the effects of climate chaos.

However, many USDA-ARS staff positions have remained vacant in Oregon and Washington for more than a year now, which impacts the broader research ecosystem and hinders the vital work of ARS. The loss of ARS staff over the past year and a half has undermined years-long research efforts and left significant knowledge gaps in highly specialized scientific areas. These terminations eliminate crucial expertise and fracture longstanding partnerships that drive agricultural innovation. Additionally, the loss of researchers' support staff, security officers, and lab technicians, administrative officers, and post-doctoral researchers has left the few remaining ARS scientists without the colleagues required to ensure the security, reliability, and efficiency of their research projects.

These missing staff positions will have lasting consequences on the region and nation. We continue to hear from Oregon and Washington producers, business owners, and scientists that critical research projects that protect our crops are in jeopardy because of the many ARS positions that remain vacant, despite being funded by Congressional appropriations.

We are eager to work with you to expeditiously hire staff to fill ARS units in the Pacific Northwest. Given the importance of ARS research to farmers, fishermen, ranchers, and the agriculture industry across the country, we urge USDA to take immediate steps to reinstate all affected researchers and support staff. The continuation of ARS's vital work is critical to ensuring the long-term stability and success of American agriculture and we look forward to working with you.

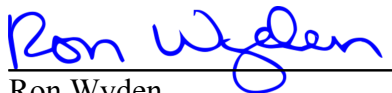
Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



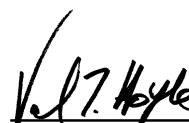
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



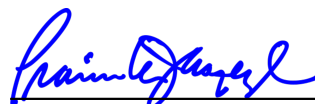
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



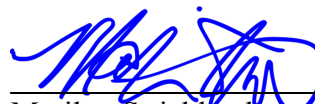
Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress



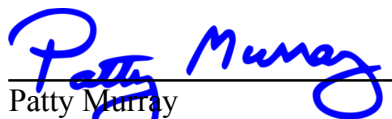
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



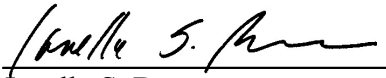
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



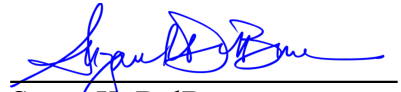
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress