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April 10, 2020

Mr. Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

National Chicken Council members are grateful for the ongoing support the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided during the COVID-19 outbreak. Your leadership has been critical to providing for a more stable chicken supply chain. America's chicken producers and processors have a long history of adapting to difficult situations and meeting changing demand to provide a safe, secure food supply and we are confident this time will be no different. However, despite current efforts, the chicken supply chain is suffering greatly from the unexpected and devastating effects of the COVID-19 outbreak that has seriously impacted livelihoods and food consumption patterns.

As a result of reduced workforce at processing plants, foodservice demand vanishing virtually overnight, historically high cold storage supply levels and a potential loss of international trade market access due to the recent detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), some chicken processors have begun to reduce eggs set to reflect decreased demand and to avoid any potential animal welfare concerns. One implication of trying to manage the supply chain in this way is the potential of delayed bird placements to family farmers that chicken processors partner with to raise chickens.

These cutbacks are not the fault of the farmers or chicken processors, but instead are merely a reflection of truly unprecedented and trying market conditions due to COVID-19. We expect processors to stand by our family farmers during this time and to honor their contracts, however we urge USDA to provide targeted aid to these producers through resources available to the Department.

We understand that Congress included within the Coronavirus Aid, Response and Economic Security (CARES) Act \$14 billion in funding authorized to the Commodity Credit Corporation as well as \$9.5 billion authorized at your discretion to assist distressed agricultural producers as a result of COVID-19. We also understand there are other tools and monies at the government's disposal to address these and similar situations during this time of economic uncertainty. We are also aware of President Trump's recent directive to provide relief to farmers and ask that you include relief for chicken farmers who may be directly impacted by reduced demand for chicken. These farmers are faced with overhead costs and any downtime will bring great financial pressure upon them.

The essential and critical industries have exhibited extreme resilience – working to care for, feed, and protect Americans – and are selflessly serving the nation by showing up to work during this time of

crisis. While the value of the work by our public health professionals, first responders, and public safety employees is unquestioned, we must also adequately recognize the service of our farmers who wake up every day to protect our food security.

NCC eagerly looks forward to partnering with you and Vice President Pence's Task Force and the many dedicated officials at the Department to continue to work toward creative solutions to target help to America's family farmers, including those who raise broilers in partnership with NCC processor members. Please advise how best we can help facilitate the implementation of such relief efforts in a timely and constructive way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Brown
President, National Chicken Council

cc: The Honorable Mike Pence, Vice President of the United States