

# The Healthy Fields and Farm Economies Act of 2018 (H.R. 4751)

Dear Members of Congress:

We the undersigned organizations endorse the Healthy Fields and Farm Economies Act of 2018 (H.R. 4751) introduced by Representatives John Faso (R-NY) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH). This legislation supports farmers, taxpayers, and our natural resources and environment by providing the tools USDA needs to measure, evaluate, and report on the effects of farm bill conservation programs. We strongly support the inclusion of this legislation in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Information regarding the natural resource and environmental impact of conservation programs is absolutely necessary in order to define, evaluate, and communicate outcomes and justify taxpayer investment return on these federal conservation programs – including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). By demonstrating the conservation outcomes achieved through the adoption of key programs and practices, this legislation would help NRCS and farmers prove the effectiveness of voluntary conservation.

This legislation would provide the necessary tools and funding to measure and evaluate the conservation outcomes of these USDA programs. It would not only ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and efficiently, but it will also provide the information necessary to better support farmers by improving conservation programs and activities. Farmers would be compensated, and their information would be kept confidential, when voluntarily participating in measurement activities.

Finally, the bill would ensure that conservation partners have a seat at the table through the opportunity for partnership agreements. The funding authorized by the legislation, entirely from existing funds, would allow NRCS to establish and implement this much needed evaluation process.

We applaud the sponsors of this legislation for addressing a need that is central to the effectiveness and success of USDA conservation programs. We urge your strong support to ensure this initiative is enacted into law as part of the new farm bill.

Sincerely,

Harpeth Conservancy