March XX, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6016

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-60

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

As you consider the fiscal year 2020 Agriculture Appropriations bill, we write to express our strong support for funding Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loans at the same level as last year.

Consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives generate less than five percent of the nation's electric power but maintain 42 percent of the nation's electric distribution lines. Electric cooperatives' distribution systems cover 56 percent of this country's land mass while serving only 12 percent of American electric consumers. Electric cooperatives use RUS Electric Loans to finance electricity distribution, transmission, and generation to provide affordable, reliable electric service to approximately 42 million people every day.

As you know, these loans are repaid with interest and have an extraordinary track record of repayment. RUS Electric Loans also contribute to deficit reduction. In fiscal year 2019 alone, electric loan repayments netted more than $161 million to the U.S. Treasury.

We also urge that RUS lending continue to be driven by the needs of the borrower rather than limiting the types of projects eligible. This flexibility will help meet the diverse challenges of RUS electric borrowers and ensure loans are available to support distribution projects, transmission projects, environmental upgrades, or the construction of new generation sources.

Lowering the U.S. deficit and keeping co-op consumers' electric bills affordable are mutually beneficial goals we can all support. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,