



May 10, 2018

Scott Walker, Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker,

We urge you to prevent attempts to eliminate UW-Extension's agriculture educator positions in certain counties. As low prices for saleable products occur simultaneously with high expenses, Wisconsin is in a critical time for farming operations and local agriculture educators are more important than ever. Our farmers depend on having qualified agriculture educators to assist with farm profitability and getting their high-quality goods to market.

Agriculture educators provide vital services to their local communities, ranging from the training of future farmers to the coordination of livestock auctions. Agriculture educators also bring the research of the University of Wisconsin to our farmers. With growing season already upon us, it is more important than ever that all Wisconsin counties be equipped with full-time staff.

As you know, Wisconsin agriculture contributes \$88.3 billion annually to our state's economy, and employs 11.9 percent of our overall workforce. However, many rural Wisconsin communities are still recovering from the Great Recession, and we are losing family farms at an alarming rate. Pair that with losses of critical resources such as UW-Extension agriculture educators, and our already struggling rural communities may face dire circumstances. Sadly, much of this could have been prevented, but we may have reached a tipping point for Wisconsin's rural communities and family farms.

In your 2015-17 budget, you cut the UW System by \$250 million. Now, merely three years later, UW-Extension, Wisconsin counties, and farmers are directly suffering as a result of these shortsighted cuts. In fact, UW-Extension will not be granting a full-time agriculture educator in some counties, even though the counties budgeted for their share of the position.

UW-Extension has cited budget cuts as the main factor for these counties not receiving their full-time agriculture educator. The budget for agriculture educators has been cut by 21 percent, or nearly half a million dollars, in the past year. If nothing is done, the many problems facing our rural communities will only get worse.

The undersigned members of the Wisconsin State Assembly and Wisconsin State Senate call on you to prevent any attempts to eliminate the agriculture educator positions, and other vital UW-Extension programs that rural Wisconsin communities and families depend on. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Spreitzer

Mark Spreitzer
State Representative
45th Assembly District

Jo Casta Zamarripa

Jo Casta Zamarripa
State Representative
8th Assembly District

Lena Taylor

Lena Taylor
State Senator
4th Senate District

Melissa Sargent

Melissa Sargent
State Representative
48th Assembly District

Evan Goyke
State Representative
18th Assembly District

Nick Milroy
State Representative
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Debra Kolste

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44th Assembly District

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State Representative
80th Assembly District

David Crowley

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State Representative
17th Assembly District

Steve Doyle

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94th Assembly District

Jonathan Brostoff

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State Representative
19th Assembly District

Jill Billings

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95th Assembly District

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State Senator
15th Senate District

Kathleen Vinehout

Kathleen Vinehout
State Senator
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Dave Considine

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Mark Miller

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Jason M. Fields

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Beth Meyers

Beth Meyers
State Representative
74th Assembly District

Lisa Subeck

Lisa Subeck
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