



May 10, 2018

Ray Cross, UW System President  
1720 Van Hise Hall  
Madison, WI 53706

Dear President Cross,

As you know, agriculture in Wisconsin is an \$88.3 billion industry, making up a large portion of Wisconsin's economy and a central piece of our heritage. Ensuring agriculture in Wisconsin remains strong requires a farming community that has the resources it needs to be successful. One of those important resources farmers in every county rely on has long been local UW-Extension agriculture educators. However, the recent restructuring of the UW System has thrown the future of this resource in doubt.

After Governor Walker cut \$250 million from the UW System in the 2015-17 budget, you announced a future restructuring of the UW System would be needed. However, that restructuring resulted in funding for agriculture educators being cut by 21 percent, or nearly half a million dollars, from FY2016-17 to FY2017-18. That level of funding cut translates to a decrease in the total number of agricultural educators, from 67 FTEs in 2016-17 to only 56 as of May 2018, depriving the farming community of a crucial resource. Concerns raised at the time of the cuts were ignored, and many counties have been blindsided by these moves.

We urge you not to reduce UW-Extension's agriculture educator positions, and have serious questions regarding your decisions to do so. As many rural communities continue to recover from the Great Recession, the knowledge and advice from local agriculture educators remains in high demand.

We also would like to know why UW System did not reach out to the legislature, either during the budget process or at any point during the regular legislative session, to request additional funds if UW-Extension was facing such dire budget circumstances? Now that the legislature has concluded its work for the year, it is all but too late to allocate additional funding. Additionally, why did you wait until most counties had finished their budgets prior to notifying them that they would no longer be receiving a full time agriculture educator? I would imagine that many of the affected counties would have reallocated available resources to ensure a full time agriculture educator was funded. Lastly, some counties will not be granted a full-time agriculture educator by UW-Extension, despite having budgeted for their share of the position. How is this apparent breach of contract going to be addressed and remedied?

As members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, we request you prevent the reduction of agriculture educators, and request answers to the questions above. It is more important than ever that UW-Extension programs, which rural Wisconsin communities and families depend on, remain intact. We urge you to do more to sound the alarm about the effects of state budget cuts and work proactively to seek additional funding from the legislature as soon as possible so these critical positions can be maintained and our farmers can receive the support they need and deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

*Mark Spreitzer*

Mark Spreitzer  
State Representative  
45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Casta Zamarripa*

Casta Zamarripa  
State Representative  
8<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Lena Taylor*

Lena Taylor  
State Senator  
4<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Evan Goyke  
State Representative  
18<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

Nick Milroy  
State Representative  
73<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

*Melissa Sargent*

Melissa Sargent  
State Representative  
48<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Sondy Pope*

Sondy Pope  
State Representative  
80<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*David Crowley*

David Crowley  
State Representative  
17<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Debra Kolste*

Debra Kolste  
State Representative  
44<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Jonathan Brostoff*

Jonathan Brostoff  
State Representative  
19<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Bill Billings*

Bill Billings  
State Representative  
95<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Steve Doyle*

Steve Doyle  
State Representative  
94<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

Terese Berceau  
State Representative  
77<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

*Janis Ringhand*

Janis Ringhand  
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15<sup>th</sup> Senate District

*Kathleen Vinehout*

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State Senator  
31<sup>st</sup> Senate District

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*Jason M. Fields*

Jason Fields  
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*Beth Meyers*

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