

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write to you to request that you include relief for agricultural fairs in potential upcoming omnibus legislation. The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread closures of fairs, and they have not made up their losses in 2021. Providing relief to struggling fairs will help them continue to support our agricultural producers, inspire the next generation of farmers, and provide services to our communities in times of emergency.

Despite 98 percent of agricultural fairs being canceled in 2020, most fairs have missed out on federal aid across the spectrum. Many were not eligible for the Paycheck Protection Program due to their quasi-governmental status, which also left them out of state and local funding in the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan. Fairs focused primarily on agricultural promotion were also not eligible for the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) program, which was reserved for performing venues and theaters, and fewer than 30 fairs were successful in securing SVOG funds.

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions estimates a loss of revenue exceeding \$4.5 billion to fair organizations in 2020 based upon the cancellation of facility events and annual fairs, and for the period of March through May 2020 alone, a survey of IAFE member fairs reported a loss of \$22 million per month because of the cancellation of events at their facilities. Although most fairs were able to resume operations in 2021, they did not earn sufficient revenues for losses in 2020. Additionally, at least 5% of organizations were unable to hold a fair in 2021 at all.

State and county fairs are a primary source for the promotion of U.S. agribusiness. Fairs promote and market U.S. agribusiness products and services, develop and administer programs to assist agribusinesses in locating or expanding throughout the country, and contribute to the development of several or many phases of agriculture or agribusiness by conducting educational programs, activities, demonstrations, contests, and exhibits. They exhibit the equipment and animals associated with agriculture and animal husbandry, and livestock shows are prominent at many fairs.

Fairs also encourage and develop the next generation of America's food producers. By cultivating a passion for agriculture in students and supporting beginning farmers and ranchers, fairs help build the future of agriculture.

Despite heavy revenue loss, fairs and fairgrounds continued to serve our community and have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic. In times of emergency, fairgrounds provide areas of shelter and refuge, serving as temporary evacuation and medical sites for victims and livestock following natural disasters. During the pandemic, they have served as vaccination and food distribution sites.

Congress has demonstrated a desire to support agricultural fairs. In September, the House Committee on Agriculture reported to the Committee of the Whole House the bipartisan Agricultural Fairs Rescue Act (H.R. 2424), introduced by Reps. Jimmy Panetta (CA-20), Billy Long (MO-07), Mike Levin (CA-49), and Dan Newhouse (WA-04), which would create a grant program for agricultural fairs, funded at \$500 million annually. Bipartisan companion legislation (S. 1092) was introduced in the Senate by Senators Tina Smith of Minnesota and Roy Blunt of Missouri.

Additionally, in the 116th Congress, Rep. Josh Harder (CA-10) introduced the Protecting Fairs During Coronavirus Act, which would create a similar grant program for agricultural fairs.

We support relief modeled on existing legislation like H.R. 2424, which would provide flexible funding to states to make grants to agricultural fairs. We also note that any relief should allow fairs to consider their losses in 2020 or 2021 when applying for aid, to cover fairs that generally occur earlier in the year in warmer climates.

Given the lack of relief agricultural fairs have received and their large revenue losses, we respectfully ask that you include relief for this uniquely American industry in potential omnibus legislation.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Josh Harder
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



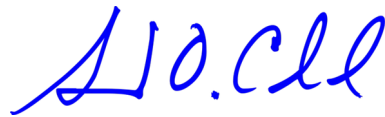
Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



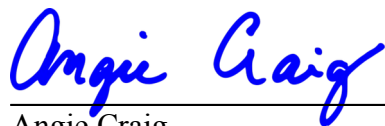
Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress