

September 8, 2021

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman, House Agriculture Committee
1300 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

The Reimagining Rural Assistance Network (RRAN) is an alliance of organizations that advocate for more effective, coherent and accountable federal resources for equitable rural prosperity. The RRAN members signed below write today in support of the Rural Prosperity Program (RPP) included in the reconciliation instructions required by S. Con. Res. 14. We believe this program is a significant opportunity to serve the most distressed rural communities, many of which have been left out of state and federal development programs.

Federal programs should build an equitable, inclusive, resilient and thriving rural America. As you consider the reconciliation instructions, we ask that you ensure they provide adequate and flexible resources, account for input from rural practitioners, and equitably distribute funds.

Rural places disproportionately help power, feed and protect America and will play a central role in national climate strategies to transition to clean energy. Yet they also face unique vulnerabilities. Rural residents need adequate, targeted and flexible federal resources to build their ability to strategically plan for, invest in and grow their communities. RPP funds should be provided to those working locally who are best able to ensure these goals are met.

Rural residents and community leaders have deep knowledge about their communities and what they need to succeed. Too often federal resources are neither flexible nor substantial enough to invest directly and successfully in their strategies, institutions, staffing and governance—in many cases, the rules and eligibility requirements for federal resources disadvantage rural places. These challenges must be resolved. Local experts must be included in program design and in the measurement of outcomes.

Rural communities of color carry the dual burden of exclusion by both race and place. Eighty-five percent of the nation's persistently poor counties are non-metro, with more than 60 percent of that population in Black and brown communities. More than half of rural Black residents and 45 percent of rural Native Americans live in a distressed county, compared to 18 percent of rural White residents. Going forward, rural development programs must address legacies of historic racism and marginalization and dismantle unfair power structures to ensure that prosperity is equitable and inclusive.

Thank you for your work supporting the wellbeing and economic livelihoods of America's rural communities. RRAN believes the RPP will be a significant investment in meeting the opportunities and needs in rural America. We look forward to working with you to fund and implement modern, flexible programs that equitably promote and empower rural residents.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Community Capital

California Center for Rural Policy

Come Dream. Come Build

Communities Unlimited

Hope Policy Institute

Housing Assistance Council

Just Transition Fund

National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA

Opportunity Finance Network

Partners for Rural Transformation

Region Five Development Commission

RuralOrganizing.org Education Fund

Rural Community Assistance Partnership