



1701 K Street NW, #700, Washington D.C. 20006



July 20, 2018

The Honorable Mike Conaway
United States House of Representatives
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Conaway:

On behalf of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) and the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA), we are writing to ask that you include the bipartisan Rural Jobs and Investment Act of 2018, S. 3034, while in conference committee for the 2018 Farm Bill.

Specifically, we ask that you support efforts to establish a new program that will strategically invest in rural communities through a Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Business-Cooperative Service. This innovative program would foster locally-driven "rural jobs accelerator partnerships" made up of entrepreneurs, local leaders, investment organizations, and training providers to improve their local, rural economies and to position their regions to be more competitive. This program would allow for multiple investment activities including the deployment of high-speed broadband services to support new business and economic growth.

As you know, many rural communities continue to struggle with business closures, job losses, and diminishing tax bases. Rural entrepreneurs also face numerous challenges in developing new businesses, including lack of capital, business networks, and training. We believe this legislation provides bipartisan solutions to these problems by delivering flexible federal funding and responsive investments to locally-driven efforts that will create jobs and catalyze economic growth.

We believe this bill includes common sense approaches to breaking down federal economic development silos by encouraging greater collaboration between the U.S. Small Business Administration, USDA, and the Farm Credit System. The legislation would give more flexibility to both federal programs and rural lenders to provide additional rural financing outside of industries directly related to agriculture.

We look forward to working with you to include this legislation in the upcoming discussions for a conferenced Farm Bill. This legislation will ensure that the needs of rural communities and entrepreneurs country-wide are met. Thank you again for your ongoing bipartisan commitment to addressing rural America's substantial business and infrastructure needs.

Sincerely,

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Nathan Ohle
Executive Director
Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug O'Brien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Doug O'Brien
President and CEO
National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA)