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OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT
REFORM

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4500

March 26, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write today to request your support in addressing an issue of critical importance to the state of Vermont: the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer.

Last month, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was detected for the first time in Vermont, in northern Orange County. It has since been detected in two neighboring counties. This detection was not surprising given the presence of EAB in neighboring states, but it is nonetheless an alarming development that has raised significant concern throughout the state.

Since its initial detection in the Detroit area in 2002, EAB has spread to 32 states across the nation, killing millions of ash trees in its path. At least 16 North American ash species are at risk of near-total elimination. The impact of this will be felt in rural and urban areas alike. In rural communities, the forest products supply chain is impacted by the loss of harvestable timber as well as the costs of complying with quarantine requirements. In cities, villages, and towns, ash trees are a significant presence in parks and along city streets, where the cost of removing and replacing them will be a major strain on local budgets.

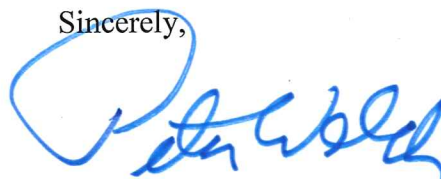
An effective response to EAB requires a strong partnership amongst federal, state, and local officials, as well as private and non-profit forest economy interests. While EAB is widespread, now is not the time to pull back on federal support. To the contrary, states like Vermont need a strong federal partner to provide resources for research, pest surveillance, technical assistance, and other activities that will help to mitigate the impacts of this infestation.

To that end, I have requested that the House Committee on Appropriations consider a significant increase in resources for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fight EAB. I urge the administration to reconsider its plans as outlined in the President's Fiscal Year 2019 Budget for USDA to cut funding for this critical work. While state and local stakeholders will undoubtedly

play an important role in halting the spread of this outbreak, USDA's leadership, financial, and technical resources are vital and irreplaceable. I urge you to make combatting this threat in Vermont and elsewhere a top priority, and fully expect a robust response.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to working with you to address this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Welch", with a large, stylized initial "P" that loops around the word "Peter".

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress