RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

KEITH CREAGH
DIRECTOR

April 11, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senate
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

I write this letter in support of funding for the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture. This fourteen-state consortium represents the upper Midwest states and is the first line of defense against a foreign animal disease outbreak as well as food-related and natural disasters.

The Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture has been in existence for nine years and started with $2 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program. Due to reductions and reallocations of amounts in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) state grants since the original federal grant, planners and emergency program managers in the Food and Agriculture Sector face significant shortfalls of funding. These shortfalls will reduce the ability of the Partnership to do its important work with food and agriculture.

The Partnership is designed to operate regionally because any foreign animal or food disaster will spread its serious adverse effects regionally. The effective collaboration and regional preparedness fostered by the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture is absolutely crucial in order to respond to these serious and adverse effects.

Through the approximately two-dozen projects completed during the past decade, the Partnership has built a reputation as a resource to stimulate and direct national discussion in the areas of maintaining commerce and economic movement during disasters, coordinating crisis communications across states and regions, training responders in unique aspects of disease management, and preparing rural communities to secure themselves against multiple natural or terrorist threats. Due to its strong reputation, local and state agencies throughout the region are increasingly turning to the Partnership to help them create and implement the protocols and procedures necessary to protect their constituencies from these crises.

In order to maintain the Partnership's ability to protect the citizens and agricultural economy of the Midwest region, I urge you to support an appropriation of $2 million over four years in the Fiscal Year 2013 Homeland Security appropriations legislation. The additional $500,000 per year that this would provide would be a very wise investment in the health and security of the region.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Creagh
Director