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America's Voice for Safe Food

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow,

As a national nonprofit public health organization dedicated to the prevention of illness and death from foodborne pathogens, STOP Foodborne Illness (STOP) is strongly opposed to six proposed amendments to the Farm Bill in the U.S. Senate that would greatly weaken the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and erode measures that protect consumers from unsafe meat and poultry products .

**SA 1039** would defund, effectively repealing, the produce safety standards section of FSMA.

**SA 1033** seeks to prevent FDA from enforcing "any" regulations until the agency submits a scientific and economic analysis to Congress. It would bar FDA from enforcing rules on import safety, laboratory testing standards, and better traceability for high risk foods. The amendment prevents FDA from enforcing the preventive controls requirements in FSMA.

**SA 1042** is designed to expand the number and type of facilities and farms not subject to critical provisions of FSMA. The amendment opens the door to large business skirting the law, distorting the importance of providing exemptions for small business, and puts the public health at risk.

**SA 1098** is tone-deaf to the wants of consumers who respond positively to FSMA, and the need of all Americans to be given the guarantee that is all is being done to safeguard the food supply. This amendment exploits those who are the least among, by using language such as "affordable food" as anti-regulatory legislation .

It is for these reasons that we were deeply troubled to learn that the Senate may consider these four amendments to the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013 (the Farm Bill) that deeply hinders the government's responsibility as outlined in FSMA. The law received bipartisan support in Congress, and today, its tenants garner strong support from Americans across the country and political spectrum.

**The King amendment (SA 1032)** would diminish the safety of the nation's meat and poultry supply, and increase the risk of foodborne illness traceable to meat and poultry products. There is abundant evidence that state meat/poultry inspection programs are not as rigorous or protective as federal inspection. The USDA's Inspector General and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth

Circuit have noted the inadequacies of state inspection programs. In addition, the amendment is duplicative and unnecessary as Congress already required, as part of the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service to develop a Cooperative Inspection Program with interested state departments of agriculture to permit state inspected meat to be shipped in interstate commerce. The program was designed to maintain federal food safety standards while supporting state inspection programs; plants that meet federal safety standards can be inspected by state employees and ship in interstate commerce. Ohio, North Dakota, and Wisconsin are already participating in the program and several other states are preparing to join the program.

**The King amendment (SA1034)** could allow some facilities that slaughter and process poultry to bypass federal inspection, putting consumers at risk of foodborne illness. The amendment allows for a custom exempt facility owner to enter into agreements with multiple persons who could each slaughter 20,000 birds. That would result in a significant amount of poultry being sold to consumers which was not inspected for safety. It also would open the door to unscrupulous poultry operations finding ways to evade federal inspection.

Incorporated as a not-for-profit in California in 1994, STOP began as a grassroots effort to promote stronger laws and regulations leading to a safe food supply and to provide information and comfort to victims of foodborne illness and their families. Nearly twenty years later, STOP is still serving a means of bringing a community together, ensuring that these people whose lives have been forever needlessly changed by contaminated food, are more than just a statistic, but a person with story to tell.

It is because of these personal experiences that STOP has become one of the leading voices throughout the country and on Capitol Hill calling for a safe food supply. The collective voices of those personally impacted by unsafe food deserve to be heard and respected. Since the 1990's STOP members worked tirelessly for passage of strong meat and poultry laws and regulations and again more recently in legislative battle to pass the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. Our efforts on behalf of all American consumers must not be undone by these six amendments to the 2013 Farm Bill.

Do not allow these six dangerous amendments to become law.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Schlunegger, CEO  
STOP Foodborne Illness

Nancy Donley, mother of Alex, *E. coli* O157:H7 victim (1987-1993)  
STOP Foodborne Illness, Board of Directors Spokesperson

Copy: Senator Harkin