

DeLauro lauds unlikely coalition seeking poultry safety improvements

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A key House lawmaker is backing a push by an unusual coalition including food industry leaders and consumer groups to get USDA to take steps to modernize poultry safety standards and prevent foodborne illnesses.

House Appropriations Chair [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.) released a statement on Thursday praising a [letter in which the group requests a meeting](#) with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to discuss the agency's regulatory approach.

Why it's important: DeLauro called the group's letter historic, citing the diversity of interests represented by its 21 signers.

"I know how rare it is for consumer groups, victims of foodborne illness, leading scientists and members of regulated industry to align around a common goal. This is a moment for USDA to make genuine improvements to our food system, which will benefit all consumers and their families," [DeLauro said in her statement](#).

The group — including officials from Tyson Foods, Perdue Farms, Butterball and Wayne Farms — said in its letter that salmonella and campylobacter, which are commonly found in raw poultry, are responsible for 70 percent of food poisoning cases tracked by the CDC. The two pathogens cause about 3 million food poisonings per year at a cost of \$6 billion, they said.

Background: DeLauro said in her statement that she has previously urged federal agencies and industry representatives to take steps to prevent salmonella outbreaks in poultry products. She said she pressed Vilsack at a budget hearing earlier this year to consider petitions to the Food Safety and Inspection Service to overhaul its performance standards.

What's next: USDA did not immediately respond to request for additional comment and it is unclear whether Vilsack will agree to meet with representatives of the group.