

United States Senate

September 25, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to extend the Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program (HBIIP) with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to ensure its continued operation beyond September 30, 2024.

Biofuels play a critical role in enhancing U.S. energy security, reducing air pollution, supporting rural economic development, and lowering prices at the pump. Since its inception in 2020, HBIIP has been vital in expanding access to higher blends of biofuels like E15, E85, and B20 for customers. Through a cost-share approach, HBIIP has helped fuel retailers invest over \$77.8 million in biofuel-related infrastructure projects, leading to an estimated 1.2 billion-gallon increase in annual biofuel sales.

All diesel vehicles can operate on B20, and 96 percent of gasoline-powered internal combustion engine vehicles are approved to use E15. Additionally, with the leadership of eight Midwest governors, the states of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Illinois have secured permanent waivers for E15 sales starting in 2025. This is a crucial step as we work towards nationwide, year-round access to E15.

However, access to these higher blends of renewable fuel can only occur if the proper infrastructure is in place at our gas stations, truck stops, and heating fuel facilities, a gap HBIIP has and will continue to help bridge. With the increased demand for the cost-share program, an additional \$500 million was directly appropriated to HBIIP by Congress in 2022 to be distributed over five quarters. As the final quarter ends on September 30, 2024, we strongly encourage the USDA to allocate CCC funds to sustain this essential program.

Historically, the Secretary has allotted over \$300 million in CCC funds to support HBIIP. Given this precedent, we urge the USDA to do so again. By continuing to invest in renewable fuel infrastructure, we can drive further adoption of higher blends of biofuels, which boosts skilled job opportunities in rural communities, protects the environment by reducing emissions, and adds value to the crops grown by producers across the country.

We cannot overstate the importance of HBIIP in advancing our nation's renewable energy goals, and we look forward to your timely response. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts
United States Senator