To: The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee  
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking member, Senate Agriculture Committee  
The Honorable Michael Conaway, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee  
The Honorable Collin Peterson, Ranking member, House Agriculture Committee

The signatories of this letter are a representative group of local and regional banks that collectively make thousands of operating loans to sugar beet and sugarcane farmers across the nation and of Certified Public Accountants and tax professionals who prepare sugar farmers’ state and federal tax filings. Given the confidentiality of their individual financial records, no one is in a better position to see and comprehend their income and cost challenges than we.

With low commodity prices across the board, American farmers are experiencing substantial economic stress. Beet and cane sugar producers are no different. For the past four years, depressed market prices caused by subsidized and dumped Mexican imports put tremendous financial stress on sugar producers, forcing some to exit the business and raising the financing hurdles for new growers seeking to enter the business.

Elimination or weakening of the safety net would dramatically alter the level of risk associated with the farming operation, a key factor in lending decisions farmers and their lenders make each year. Without an effective safety net, lenders would balk at offering operating loans to farmers who would have little prospect of repaying the loans in a depressed market.

We have had the opportunity to review the “Sugar Policy Modernization Act” that sugar policy opponents proposed to Congress in November 2017. It is clear the food-manufacturer opponents of sugar policy do not know what we know.

If this bill, or its individual elements, is adopted, it would force oversupply of the U.S. sugar market and would effectively remove the price safety net for American sugar farmers. The collapse of domestic sugar producers would cause major disruptions in the supply chain for food manufacturers and American consumers.

The economic repercussions would be severe for the many vulnerable rural communities and regional economies that depend on a strong sugar industry. Transfer of American economic activity and jobs to foreign sugar-producing countries would be the result. The proposed legislation favors foreign sugar producers and multinational candy conglomerates over American jobs.

Given the current fragile financial state of the U.S. sugar industry, we implore the Members of Congress to maintain a strong safety net for sugar farmers in the next Farm Bill, and to oppose any legislation that would weaken it.

Respectfully,
MONTANA
Curtis, Sommers & Associates PLLC
Billings
First State Bank of Forsyth
Forsyth
Rabo AgriFinance
Billings
Smith, Lange & Halley, PC
Sidney
Yellowstone Bank
Sidney

NEBRASKA
Dana F. Cole & Company, LLP
Scottsbluff
Farm Credit Services of America
Omaha
Platte Valley Bank
Scottsbluff

NORTH DAKOTA
Ag. Country Farm Credit Services
Fargo
American Federal Bank
Fargo
American State Bank and Trust Co.
Williston
Bank of Hamilton
Hamilton
Choice Financial Group
Fargo
Choice Financial Group
Grafton
Choice Financial Group
Grand Forks
United Valley Bank
Cavalier

OREGON
The Nichols Accounting Group, P.C.
Ontario

SOUTH CAROLINA
AgFirst Farm Credit Bank
Columbia

TEXAS
First Community Bank
San Benito

WASHINGTON
Alegria & Company, PS
Yakima
Keybank, N.A.
Kennewick

WYOMING
ANB Bank
Worland
James Reilly, CPA, PC
Cody
Pinnacle Bank
Worland
Russell & Russell, CPAs
Basin
SBW & Associates, PC
Cody
SBW & Associates, PC
Worland
Western Sage CPA, PC
Worland