

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleague:

As members of the Congressional Agritourism Caucus, we invite you to cosponsor H.R. 5203, the bipartisan Accelerating the Growth of Rural Innovation and Tourism Opportunities to Uphold Rural Industries and Sustainable Marketplaces (AGRITOURISM) Act. This legislation would create an Office of Agritourism at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure that agritourism businesses have an advocate within the department.

From wineries, farm breweries, and distilleries to u-pick farms and farm stands, agritourism has a presence in every state and nearly every congressional district. Farmers, ranchers, and growers are increasingly turning to agritourism to diversify their revenue streams, provide educational and recreational opportunities to kids and families, and form deeper connections with their communities. Agritourism also helps to preserve agricultural traditions and spurs economic development in our nation's rural areas – according to the most recent Census of Agriculture, agritourism-related income increased by nearly 370 percent from \$202 million in 2002 to \$949 million in 2017.

Despite the importance of these mostly small and family-owned businesses to the rural economy, there is currently no dedicated voice for agritourism within the federal government and no place for agritourism business owners to go to learn about federal resources available to them. The AGRITOURISM Act would resolve this by creating an Office of Agritourism within USDA. This office would be tasked with advising the Secretary of Agriculture on agritourism-related policy matters, promoting agritourism activities, and ensuring that information about federal resources available to agritourism businesses is easily accessible.

I hope you will join us in supporting this important and fast-growing industry. For more information or to sign on as a cosponsor, please contact Chris Katson with Congresswoman Wexton at Chris.Katson@mail.house.gov or Chris MacArthur with Congressman Newhouse at Chris.MacArthur@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wexton

Dan Newhouse

Member of Congress

Member of Congress