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The State Senate
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

COMMITTEES:
Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Chairman
Natural Resources and the Environment
Public Safety
Retirement

October 24, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As you are aware, Hurricane Helene has caused catastrophic damage to Georgia's agricultural industry. Initial numbers collected by the University of Georgia have estimated the total damage to our industry at \$6.4 billion. Direct crop losses to Georgia farmers and foresters will exceed \$3 billion this year alone.

As the Chairman of the Georgia Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee, I am joined by my undersigned colleagues in writing to express our concern regarding the exclusion of Bulloch, Burke, Candler, Effingham, Evans, Jenkins, Lincoln, Long, Pierce, Richmond, Screven, Tattnall, and Wayne Counties in Georgia from the recent USDA Risk Management Agency's initial Hurricane Indemnity Policy coverage area in the wake of Hurricane Helene. We want to highlight the urgency of this matter on behalf of Georgia farmers who have faced substantial damage and, as of the date of this letter, remain excluded from receiving the full benefits of the Hurricane Indemnity Policy program under USDA's proposed coverage area.

The exclusion of these counties from the initial trigger map is of great concern to Georgia's Agricultural Community and our state as a whole. These concerns are bolstered by the reported damage to the National Center for Environmental Information Headquarters (NCEI) in Asheville, North Carolina as a result of Hurricane Helene. As you know, these damages have affected NCEI's ability to collect, maintain and interpret crucial IBTrACS data which is used to assess eligibility for the Hurricane Indemnity Policy following similar natural disasters.

It is critical for RMA to conduct additional analysis to fully capture the force and impact of Hurricane Helene. We are confident that a thorough analysis of all available data will provide your administration with a comprehensive assessment of the devastating generational impact facing the aforementioned counties and other affected areas.

Farmers and communities across our state are counting on the indemnity coverage to help recover the substantial losses they have suffered. We urge the United States Department of Agriculture to prioritize the reevaluation of all available data from sources such as NOAA, IBTrACS, and reliable third party evaluations to ensure our farmers receive the full support that they so desperately need as quickly as possible.

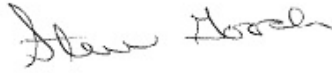
We appreciate your attention to this pressing matter and we are hopeful that a resolution is forthcoming. Thank you for your continued support of Georgia's agricultural community.

Sincerely,

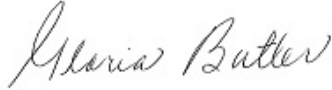
Russ Goodman
Chairman, Georgia Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee



Senator John F. Kennedy
President Pro Tempore



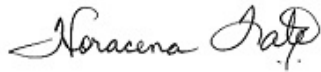
Senator Steve Gooch
Majority Leader



Senator Gloria Butler
Minority Leader



Senator Ed Harbison
District 15



Senator Horacena Tate
District 38



Senator Emmanuel Jones
District 10



Senator Nan Orrock
District 36



Senator Bill Cowser
District 46



Senator Feddie Powell Sims
District 12



Senator Donzella James
District 35



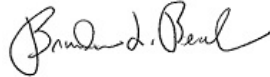
Senator Gail Davenport
District 44



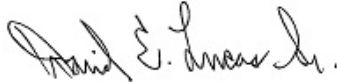
Senator Frank Gin
District 47



Senator John Albers
District 56



Senator Brandon Beach
District 21



Senator David Lucas Sr.
District 26



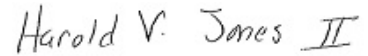
Senator Chuck Hufstetler
District 52



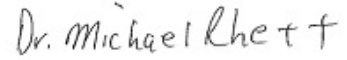
Senator Ben Watson
District 01




Senator Marty Harbin
District 16



Senator Harlod Jones II
District 22



Senator Michael Rhett
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Senator Elena Parent
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Senator Larry Walker
District 20



Senator Blake Tillery
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Senator Lee Anderson
District 24



Senator Matt Brass
District 28



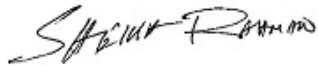
Senator Tonya Anderson
District 43

Senator Kay Kirkpatrick, MS

Senator Kay Kirkpatrick
District 32



Senator Strickland
District 17



Senator Sheikh Rahman
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Senator Greg Dolezal
District 27



Senator Randy Robertson
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Senator Sally Harrell
District 40



Senator Carden H. Summers
District 13

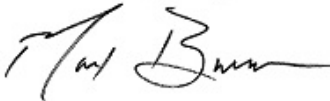


Senator Billy Hickman

District 04



Senator Nikki Merritt
District 09



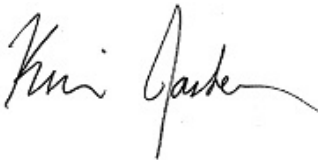
Senator Max Burns
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Senator Jason Anavitarte
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Senator Sonya Halpern
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Senator Kim Jackson
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Senator Clint Dixon
District 45



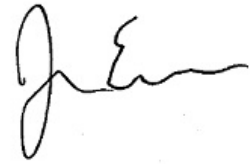
Senator Bo Hatchett
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Senator Derek Mallow
District 02



Senator Mike Hodges
District 03



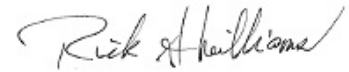
Senator Jason Esteves
District 06



Senator Nabilah Islam Parkes
District 07



Senator Josh McLaurin
District 14



Senator Rick Williams
District 25



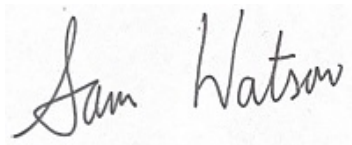
Senator Ed Setzler
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Senator Shawn Still
District 48



Senator Shelly Echols
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Senator Sam Watson
District 11



Senator Tim Bearden
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