

RELEASE: Indiana young farmer testifies in front of House Agriculture Subcommittee on the importance of agricultural research

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**(WASHINGTON, DC, June 5, 2019)** This morning, the **House Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research** held a hearing to examine the impacts of relocating two key **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** research agencies outside of the capital. The two agencies, the **Economic Research Service (ERS)** and the **National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**, conduct research and administer programs that are critical to the success of the next generation of farmers and ranchers, such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant program.

**Liz Brownlee**, owner and operator of **Nightfall Farm and President of the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition**, a chapter of the **National Young Farmers Coalition**, traveled to D.C. from Crothersville, Indiana to testify in front of the Subcommittee, and shared a beginning farmer's perspective on the proposed relocation. In her written testimony, Brownlee said, "Young and beginning farmers face serious obstacles to launching and growing their farm businesses. I grew up on my family's farm, but from day one there was a clear message: you can't make a living farming. But I did start farming on my parents' land in 2014, and I face different challenges from my parents' farming generation. Young farmers cannot find or afford farmland; student debt is compromising our ability to capitalize our businesses; and increasing severe and unpredictable weather make production more challenging than ever."

"Congress and the USDA's responses to our challenges will only be delayed and made more difficult with the relocation of ERS and NIFA. Farmers and ranchers are often not working directly with these agencies, but have a stake in the work that they do. Farmers like me do not need NIFA and ERS to be in my community. I do need NIFA and ERS to do research and support the policymakers who serve our nation's farmers; work best done in our nation's capital."

Brownlee responded to a question from Rep. Antonio Delgado on the impact that climate change is having on farmers in her community, and how the proposed move of these agencies might affect their ability to adapt. Brownlee said that many farmers across the Midwest and in her community in Southern Indiana are more than three weeks behind in their planting schedules. She added, "We've got to figure out how to respond to climate change because it's a problem right now, and we need NIFA and ERS working hard in DC to make that research available to all farmers. I can't respond as quickly if I don't have sound science to support my decisions on my farm."

Brownlee's full testimony can be found here:

<https://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/Testimony.aspx?TID=515>

*The National Young Farmers Coalition (Young Farmers) is a national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. Visit us on the web at [youngfarmers.org](http://youngfarmers.org), and on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).*

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