

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2004

The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman:

We are writing to inquire about the Department of Agriculture's plans to implement language in the conference report accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004 (Public Law 108-199) addressing the dangers of antibiotic overuse in animal agriculture. The provision in question is:

The conferees strongly encourage the Secretary to work to ensure that no chicken purchased for the School Lunch Program contains fluoroquinolones, including the initiation of a policy to not purchase chickens for these programs from companies that do not have a stated policy that they do not use fluoroquinolones in their chickens.

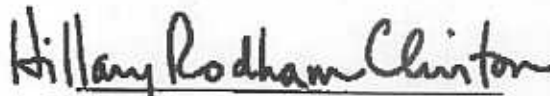
That provision was added in response to an amendment offered by Senator Clinton and adopted during the Senate's consideration of the USDA appropriations bill. The amendment was similar to the School Nutrition Antibiotic Safety Act, H.R. 3022, sponsored by Congressman Brown.

We understand USDA generally issues its school nutrition program purchasing specifications in April. Given the short timeline from the law's January 23rd enactment to the Department's issuance of detailed purchasing requirements, we would appreciate learning as quickly as possible about USDA's plans for the provision's implementation.

This language is an important step toward a federal government procurement policy comparable to the responsible actions already taken by McDonald's Wendy's, and other leading chicken retailers. Effective implementation by USDA can ensure that federal school nutrition programs no longer lag behind the private sector on this important issue. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,


SHERROD BROWN
Member of Congress


HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
United States Senator

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