

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C.

June 12, 2024

Mr. Willie Jett
Commissioner of Education
Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Dear Commissioner Jett:

On April 24, 2024, the first trial began for seven defendants associated with the Minnesota-based nonprofit Feeding Our Future (FOF) for their part in defrauding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Federal Child Nutrition Program (FCNP) of over \$250 million in taxpayer money.¹ As of today, the U.S. Attorney has charged 70 individuals with federal crimes for benefiting personally from an illegal scheme that diverted \$250 million of FCNP funds away from feeding hungry children.² Of the 70 individuals charged, 18 have pleaded guilty, one has fled the country and one has died.³

We write today to request additional information as we continue our oversight of the USDA's and the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) administration of the FCNP and oversight of FOF. Your January 5, 2024, document production to Minnesota's Office of the Legislative Auditor has led to additional inquiries regarding the USDA's and the MDE's involvement in the "largest COVID-19 fraud scheme in the nation."⁴

¹ Dana Thiede, *7 defs. to be prosecuted in first "Feeding Our Future" trial*, KARE 11 Apr. 22, 2024), <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/courts-news/first-feeding-our-future-fraud-trial-gets-underway/89-228d2d00-b453-42ec-9018-12b5df49702d>; Off. of Pub. Affs., *U.S. Att'y Announces Fed. Charges Against 47 Defs. in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Sept. 20, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-attorney-announces-federal-charges-against-47-defendants-250-million-feeding-our-future>.

² *Id.*;

Off. of Pub. Affs., *Shakopee Couple Indicted for Their Roles in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Oct. 19, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/pr/shakopee-couple-indicted-their-roles-250-million-feeding-our-future-fraud-scheme>; Off. of Pub. Affs., *Blaine Man Indicted for His Role in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Oct. 28, 2022), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/pr/blaine-man-indicted-his-role-250-million-feeding-our-future-fraud-scheme>; Off. of Pub. Affs., *U.S. Att'y Announces Fed. Charges Against 10 Additional Defs. in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUST. (Mar. 13, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/pr/us-attorney-announces-federal-charges-against-10-additional-defendants-250-million>.

³ Deena Winter, *DFL lawmaker withdraws bills giving millions to nonprofit mentioned in Feeding Our Future case*, MINN. REFORMER (Apr. 23, 2024), <https://minnesotareformer.com/2024/04/23/dfl-lawmaker-withdraws-bills-giving-millions-to-nonprofit-mentioned-in-feeding-our-future-case/>.

⁴ U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., *supra* note 1.

The Committees on Agriculture, Education and the Workforce, and Oversight and Accountability have jurisdiction under Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives to conduct oversight of these matters.⁵

To gain a better understanding of the MDE's actions surrounding the fraud scheme, we request that the MDE produce the following documents **from February 1, 2020, to December 3, 2023**, and provide sufficient responses to the following requests (instructions attached) no later than June 26, 2024 (two weeks from the date of this letter):

1. All communications between the MDE staff regarding FOF and/or FOF sites.
2. All communications between the MDE staff regarding Partners in Nutrition (PIN) and/or PIN sites.
3. All communications between the MDE staff regarding Partners in Quality Care (PIQC) and/or PIQC sites.
4. All communications between the MDE staff and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regarding FOF and/or FOF sites.
5. All communications between the MDE staff and the FBI regarding PIN and/or PIN sites.
6. All communications between the MDE staff and the FBI regarding PIQC and/or PIQC sites.
7. All documents the MDE provided to the FBI regarding FOF and/or FOF sites.
8. All documents the MDE provided to the FBI regarding PIN and/or PIN sites.
9. All documents the MDE provided to the FBI regarding PIQC and/or PIQC sites.
10. All communications between the MDE and the USDA, including USDA's Midwest Regional Office, regarding any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. FOF sites
 - c. PIN
 - d. PIN sites
 - e. PIQC
 - f. PIQC sites
11. All internal MDE communications regarding any of the following:
 - a. FOF

⁵ R. of the H.R., 118th Cong. at 6-11 (Jan. 10, 2023).

- b. FOF sites
 - c. PIN
 - d. PIN sites
 - e. PIQC
 - f. PIQC sites
12. All internal MDE communications that references any of the following:
- a. Aimee Bock
 - b. Kara Lomen
 - c. Sharon Ross
 - d. FOF
 - e. FOF sites
 - f. PIN
 - g. PIN sites
 - h. PIQC
 - i. PIQC sites
 - j. Gar Gaar
 - k. Family Services (also known as Youth Leadership Academy)
 - l. Average Mohammed
 - m. All-Star Academy
 - n. Safari Restaurant
 - o. Action for East African People.
13. All MDE communications with or regarding Judge John Guthman.
14. All MDE communications with or regarding Aimee Bock's legal action against MDE.
15. All communications between the MDE and Kara Lomen.
16. All communications between the MDE and Sharon Ross.
17. All communications between the MDE and the Minnesota Department of Health regarding any of the following:
- a. FOF sites
 - b. PIN sites
 - c. PIQC sites
18. All MDE meeting minutes that mention any of the following:
- d. FOF
 - e. PIN
 - f. PIQC
19. All communications regarding the ruling of April 21, 2021, in the case of Feeding Our Future v. Minnesota Department of Education, Case No. 62-CV-20-5492.

20. All communications regarding the ruling of September 18, 2023, PIQC Appeal of the Minnesota Department of Education Decision Child and Adult Care Food Program December 2021 Claims for Reimbursement.⁶
21. A detailed description of the CLiCS technology used to submit and approve applications.
22. All site applications for the Summer Food Service Program for any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. PIN
 - c. PIQC
23. All site applications for the Child and Adult Care Food Program for any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. PIN
 - c. PIQC
24. All communications sent to the USDA, including the USDA's Midwest Regional Office, by the MDE regarding any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. PIN
 - c. PIQC
25. All communications with the Minnesota Governor's office regarding any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. PIN
 - c. PIQC
26. A timeline starting on the date that MDE identified issues, to the date of this letter, of any actions/events regarding any of the following:
 - a. FOF
 - b. FOF sites
 - c. PIN
 - d. PIN sites
 - e. PIQC
 - f. PIQC sites
27. All versions of the "Game Plan Document," cited in Aimee Bock's recent document No. 62-CV-23-863 pg. 20 (attached).
28. All documents provided by MDE to the FBI and/or the U.S. Attorney's Office, part of the co-equal branches of government, related to FOF, FOF sites, PIN, PIN sites, PIQC, and PIQC sites.

⁶ 995 N.W.2d 631 (Minn. Ct. App. 2023)

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Should you have any questions, please contact Patricia Straughn with the Committee on Agriculture at 202-225-2171, Gabriella Pistone with the Committee on Education and the Workforce at 202-225-4527, or Daniel Ashworth with the Committee on Oversight and Accountability at 202-253-1855.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
U.S. House Committee on Education and
the Workforce



James Comer
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Oversight and
Accountability



Glenn "GT" Thompson
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture



Brad Finstad
Chairman
Subcommittee on Nutrition, Foreign
Agriculture, and Horticulture
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota