



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
**DEMOCRATS**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Pallone Calls to Eliminate Duplicative USDA Catfish Program**

*Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) called for the elimination of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's catfish inspection program today at the Subcommittee on Health hearing titled "Waste and Duplication in the USDA Catfish Inspection Program:"*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for calling this important hearing to examine waste and duplication in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) catfish inspection program.

Ensuring that our nation's seafood supply is safe, sanitary, and wholesome is essential. Seafood, including catfish, is a healthy source of protein and it is critical that we do our part to ensure this commodity is readily and easily available to American consumers.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is the primary watchdog of our food supply and it oversees approximately 80 percent of the food Americans eat, including seafood. Unfortunately, FDA was stripped of its oversight of catfish when, in 2008, conferees secretly inserted language into the Farm Bill creating a new catfish program at USDA. This was done without any formal support of the House, and without any evidence that there was an existing food safety problem associated with catfish that warranted a new program.

The fact is the new program was and is not needed. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has cited USDA's catfish program as an example of a duplicative government program in 10 different reports. As recently as April 2016, GAO concluded that repealing the USDA catfish program would eliminate a duplicate federal program and save American taxpayers millions of dollars each year without affecting the safety of catfish.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed a bipartisan Congressional Review Act joint resolution to end the duplicative and wasteful USDA catfish inspection program. If this resolution were enacted, it would return catfish oversight back to FDA where it belongs. That is why, Chairman Upton and I sent a bipartisan letter, signed by 34 members of the Committee, to House leadership urging that the Senate joint resolution be brought up for consideration before the House. A subsequent bipartisan letter to leadership was sent by Reps. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and Vicky Hartzler (R-MO), this one signed by 206 members, also

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urging the House consider the Senate joint resolution. Between these two letters there are 220 members on record in support of bringing the resolution to the floor and eliminating USDA's catfish inspection program--that's a majority of the House.

I look forward to hearing more from our witnesses today about how FDA's existing seafood inspection program is sufficient to ensure the safety of catfish for American consumers and why USDA's program is not necessary to protect public health. I am also interested in learning more about the cost of this program to taxpayers and the impact USDA's duplicative seafood inspections program has on the seafood industry and American consumers.

I hope this hearing helps highlight why the House must take action on the Senate joint resolution quickly and move to nullify USDA's catfish inspection program. I'm glad our Committee continues its track record of working together to ensure food safety in a fiscally responsible way.

Thank you. I yield back.

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