

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 13, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Rollins,

I am writing to urge you to immediately rescind the Notice of Proposed Removal (NOPR) sent to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) employee and my constituent, Ellen Mei. Ms. Mei recently participated in a media interview in her personal capacity. The NOPR is retaliation against Ms. Mei's expression of her First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

Ellen Mei is a dedicated public servant and has actively pursued the USDA's stated mission to "harness the Nation's agricultural abundance to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition security in the United States," as a Program Specialist and Lead Program Specialist for the last five and half years in the Northeast Regional Office. Following the federal government shutdown, press outlets across the country have been interviewing impacted constituencies, including federal employees, to inform the American public. On October 2nd, Ms. Mei exercised her constitutionally guaranteed right to free speech to share her lived experience during a nationally televised interview. The next day, October 3rd, Ms. Mei received a Notice of Proposed Removal (NOPR) that specifically noted the interview as cause for her removal from the position she has served with distinction and had no bearing on her ability to accomplish her department's mission.

Ms. Mei joined the USDA to serve her country and her fellow Americans who rely on the critical services of the Agency you are charged with leading and stewarding. Like every public servant, she took an oath to serve this nation, protect and honor the Constitution, and dedicate her labor in pursuit of the USDA's mission. Ms. Mei remains committed to continuing that mission and our shared constituents would be well served with her in her current position. I am urging you to rescind the NOPR and allow her to resume her duties when the federal shutdown ends.

We look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ayanna S. Pressley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name being more prominent.

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator