

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2026

The Honorable Mindy Brashears
Under Secretary
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Under Secretary Brashears:

We write to oppose the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) proposed rules to permanently increase line speed limits for poultry (Docket No. FSIS-2025-0012)¹ and pork (Docket No. FSIS-2025-0009)² processing facilities and to eliminate the disclosure of vital worker safety data.

Line speed limits exist to protect workers and food safety, and increasing those limits with no new safeguards only worsens the risks. Meatpacking and poultry workers must perform repetitive, forceful tasks with knives and saws in very crowded, excessively noisy and wet spaces, often in extreme temperatures. Studies are clear that this work leaves them at very high risk of serious musculoskeletal disorders of the hand, wrist and shoulder, amputations, devastating injuries from slipping and hearing loss and other injuries.

Even with existing line speed limits, severe injuries are frequent. The largest meatpacking companies are among the top ten companies reporting the highest numbers of amputations and injuries requiring hospitalization.³ USDA's own research shows that over 81% of poultry workers,⁴ and 46% of hog slaughter workers,⁵ are at high risk for musculoskeletal disorders, and line speed increases are associated with greater injury risk of upper-body disorders in both

¹ <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/federal-register-rulemaking/federal-register-rules/maximum-line-speed-rates-young-chicken>

² <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/policy/federal-register-rulemaking/federal-register-rules/maximum-line-speed-under-new-swine>

³ Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Deregulating Meatpacking Line Speeds (May 15, 2025) <https://clf.jhsph.edu/viewpoints/deregulating-meatpacking-line-speeds>

⁴ Carisa Harris-Adamson, PhD, CPE et al., Swine Processing Line Speed Evaluation Study at 76 (January 9, 2025) https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/documents/PULSE_SwineStudy_250109_Final.pdf


⁵ Carisa Harris-Adamson, PhD, CPE et al., Poultry Processing Line Speed Evaluation Study (PULSE) at 46 (January 9th, 2025), https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/documents/PULSE_PoultryStudy_250109_Final.pdf

poultry and pork facilities. Labor rights groups and unions filed a lawsuit against the USDA over its waivers to allow increased line speeds in poultry plants in 2020 and challenged the USDA's Regulation creating the New Swine Inspection System in 2019.⁶⁷

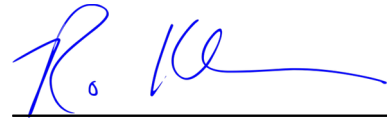
Amputations in poultry facilities are almost 5 times the average for all industries, while meatpacking workers overall suffer 14 times as many.⁸ Despite this, USDA is proposing line speeds increases for chicken slaughter from 140 birds per minute (bpm) to 175, 55 bpm to 60 for turkeys, and limits would be eliminated in their entirety for pork facilities. The proposal also eliminates reporting requirements on worker safety. The risks may start with the workers, but they extend to every American, as the increased work speed reduces the capacity to catch contamination at a time when inspectors are already short-staffed.⁹

It is unacceptable to create a work environment that will increase the harm to workers and to subject them to more life-changing injury and the public to more foodborne illness. To align with the growing national demand for more transparency about the quality of American food, we urge you to not move forward with this proposal.

Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



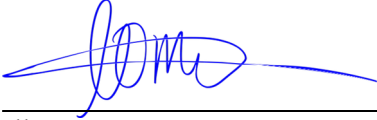
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

⁶ UFCW, Poultry Workers, Already at Risk From COVID-19, Sue USDA Over Dangerous Line Speeds, <https://www.ufcw.org/press-releases/poultrylawsuit/> (September 7, 2020)

⁷ <https://www.ufcw.org/press-releases/porklinespeed/>

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities (2020) https://www.bls.gov/web/osh/cd_r5.htm

⁹ Alana Semuels, Time, <https://time.com/7275746/food-safety-fda-layoffs/>, April 8, 2025



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress