



UNITED STATES SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON

**AGING**

RANKING MEMBER KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

# **Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand's Opening Statement “The Aging Farm Workforce: America's Vanishing Family Farms”**

*Thank you, Mr. Chairman.*

*As we all know, our farm workforce is aging. On average, our nation's farmers are older now than they were when the last census of agriculture was conducted in 2017.*

*Because of financial stress, many farmers who would otherwise retire have had to keep on working. Some farmers have faced pressure to sell their farms to other owners if their family does not want to continue operations. Meanwhile, a lack of training and rural amenities, like broadband and childcare, have made farming less appealing to younger families.*

*Our farmers provide an accessible and abundant supply of food to our whole nation, but with increased consolidation and more farmlands being converted to non-agriculture uses, we are sending ourselves down a very risky path.*

*Our duty in Congress should be to support our farmers whatever way we can. With a changing climate, rising prices, volatile markets, our farmers are facing many challenges that make success even harder.*

*One of the most important things we can do is to pass a robust and bipartisan farm bill that addresses the needs of the agricultural community as well as nutrition and conservation needs.*

*To encourage a younger generation to return to farming, we must invest in our rural communities. New and beginning farmers and young people who are returning to their family farm do not only consider the income that is tied to farming. They need to be able to access broadband and childcare and health care. We need to make sure that there is enough mental health support at time when we see more farmers dying by suicide.*

*I have to say that the anxiety and stress caused by the fluctuating tariffs that we are currently seeing has not helped. Our farmers need consistent policy to make long-term planting and investment decisions. They need reliability from Congress in an unpredictable profession. Approximately 20 percent of our agriculture is exported, and farmers rely on those markets to make a profit.*

*I look forward to a positive and productive conversation today to discuss ways we can support our aging farmers, while making sure new and beginning farmers continue to enter the farm workforce.*

*Thank you, Mr. Chairman.*