



Office of the Secretary  
Washington, DC 20250

August 12, 2024

DR. KENRETT JEFFERSON-MOORE  
*Chair*  
*NAREEE Advisory Board*  
*1400 Independence Avenue, SW*  
*Whitten Building, Room 332 A*  
*Washington, DC 20250*

Dear Dr. Jefferson Moore,

Thank you for submitting recommendations to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding increasing our diversity and inclusivity efforts. This is a timely and important topic; USDA is actively pursuing equity-focused improvements internally and externally through engagements with program recipients and other stakeholders.

Our Department's Equity Commission Final Report, released in February 2024, outlines how equity can be integrated so that all customers of USDA receive a fair shot at a prosperous, successful livelihood. Many of the Equity Commission's 66 recently released recommendations were similar to, or overlapped, the Board's Diversity and Inclusivity Recommendations. I recommend you review the [Equity Commission's \(EC\) Final Report](#) closely and continue to engage with USDA on our implementation progress.

The NAREEE Board suggested five recommendations that aren't specifically contained within the EC Final Report's recommendations. These Board suggestions include: an increased focus on "place-based" approaches in food and nutrition security; increasing BIPOC images/voices in multi-media communications; additional opportunities for BIPOC involvement in the Senior Executive Service (SES); increasing minority recruitment in STEM fields related to agriculture and nutrition; and improving review panels for the agency's competitive grant programs. I understand you were provided with examples of how USDA is implementing the Board's five recommendations above in our research mission area and its agencies (e.g., NIFA). We will continue to achieve these improvements and scale them throughout our Department.

Thank you again for your service representing the needs of stakeholders to USDA. I look forward to continued engagement with the NAREEE Board on future recommendations.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. VILSACK  
*Secretary*