

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 4, 2015

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

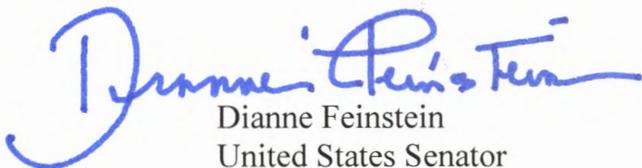
We write to urge you to finalize the department's proposed performance standards to control *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in poultry products as quickly as possible. The department designed the new pathogen standards to reduce the number of foodborne illnesses and deaths attributed to poultry products. Public health is at stake and we believe the department should act swiftly to implement these new safeguards.

We are deeply troubled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2014 Food Safety Progress Report. A copy of the report is attached for your reference. It shows that the United States has not made progress in reducing the number of *Salmonella* illnesses that occur each year, which is alarming. Furthermore, the CDC found that in 2014, *Campylobacter* illnesses increased by 13 percent over the baseline number of annual illnesses that occurred from 2006 to 2008. Delays in finalizing the pathogen standards for poultry products allow these high rates of foodborne illness to persist.

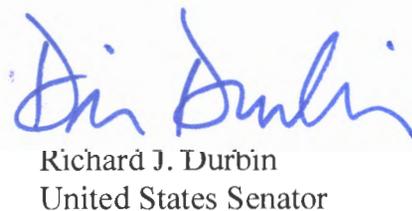
These alarming rates of foodborne illness are caused, in part, by the unacceptably high levels of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* contamination on poultry products. Routine testing done in 2013 by the department found that more than 40 percent of ground chicken tested positive for *Salmonella*. A 2012 study found that 26 percent of poultry parts tested positive for *Salmonella* and 21 percent tested positive for *Campylobacter*. As of today, there are no pathogen standards for poultry parts and the standards for ground poultry are sorely outdated.

Thank you for your attention to our request on this important public health matter.

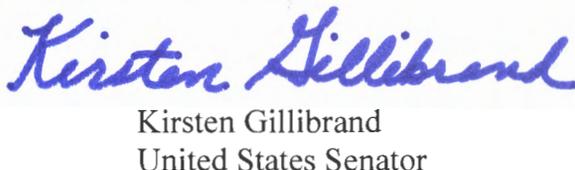
Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

DF/tc  
enclosure

# 2014 FOOD SAFETY PROGRESS REPORT

Pathogen	Healthy People 2020 target rate	2014 rate*	Change compared with 2006-2008†	
<i>Campylobacter</i>	 8.5	13.45	 13% increase	
<i>E. coli</i> O157‡	 0.6	0.92	 32% decrease	
<i>Listeria</i>	 0.2	0.24	No change	
<i>Salmonella</i>	 11.4	15.45	No change	
<i>Vibrio</i>	 0.2	0.45	 52% increase	
<i>Yersinia</i>	 0.3	0.28	 22% decrease	



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

October 2014

\*Culture-confirmed infections per 100,000 population  
†2006-2008 were the baseline years used to establish Healthy People 2020 targets

‡Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O157

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/foodnet](http://www.cdc.gov/foodnet)