Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2019

Norman Sharpless
Acting Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Re: Supporting the Use of Technologies Such like Blockchain to Promote Food Safety

Dear Commissioner Sharpless,

As members of the Congressional Blockchain Caucus, we write in support of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's focus on maintaining food safety through technologies such as blockchain and the agency's upcoming session on a blueprint for "A New Era of Smarter Food Safety".

Blockchain technology applications offer promising solutions to reduce food safety risks in our nation's food supply. In recent food safety outbreaks, such as the romaine lettuce e coli outbreak, an entire industry was halted because of a lack of data on the source of the contamination. With blockchain, investigators could have quickly traced the source of the contamination and acted to remove the product from the market. Using these technologies will reduce the need for large scale recalls and, more importantly, increase consumer safety. We applaud the efforts of the FDA's blueprint and we're pleased language for FDA food traceability measures were included in the FY2020 House Appropriations report language.[1]

In recent discussions with stakeholders utilizing blockchain technology, we heard several ideas and comments that we urge your full and fair consideration of:

- Consider creating incentives for entities to invest in advanced technologies, like blockchain, to aid with foodborne illness outbreaks and regulatory compliance.
- Foster public-private collaboration to find ways to transparently share data in a protected environment during foodborne illness outbreak or similar critical need.
- Continued messaging on permissioned food safety blockchain as an enterprise application to encourage companies in the food system to invest in technologies that can operate parallel to federal compliance requirements. However, it will be important to encourage open standards and governance to allow for interoperability between platforms.

---

[1] See pg. 22 of Committee Report for H.R. 3164, included in the final passage of the minibus package in H.R. 3055, located at: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-116hrpt107/pdf/CRPT-116hrpt107.pdf:

> "Blockchain Food Traceability.—The Committee notes the potential of blockchain technology to revolutionize the practice of food traceability, tracking food products from origin through every point of contact on the journey to the consumer. The Committee is interested in how blockchain technology can be utilized to accurately trace food and mitigate the risks associated with food contaminated outbreaks and to develop effective strategies for controls. The Committee encourages NIFA to coordinate research to reduce the risk of foodborne illness through the application of blockchain technology."

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Again, thank you for your attention to this very important issue, and for your expediency in looking at technological solutions to make vital government functions work efficiently

Sincerely,

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress