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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

September 4, 2024

Larry Helfant
Chief Operating Officer
Boar's Head Provision Co., Inc.
1819 Main St, #800
Sarasota, FL 34236

Jeff Szymanski
Plant Manager, Jarratt
Boar's Head Provision Co., Inc.
2230 Wyatts Mill Rd
Jarratt, VA 23867

Dear Mr. Helfant and Mr. Szymanski,

I write regarding the devastating listeria outbreak resulting from deli meats produced at the Boar's Head plant in Jarratt, Virginia. To date, at least nine people have died and at least 57 people across 18 states have been hospitalized because of this outbreak.[1]

I am particularly concerned that this outbreak follows a pattern of unacceptable conditions at the Jarratt facility. Noncompliance records issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) show a history of workplace hazards and food safety issues. These violations include meat residue and debris on food contact surfaces, clogged drains and standing water, blood on the floor, and black mold.[2]

It is well understood that damp and unsanitary environments are hospitable for the growth of listeria.[3] I find it unacceptable that these conditions were allowed to persist, and that permanent corrective action was not taken to resolve the documented noncompliance.

Please provide detailed information addressing the following questions.

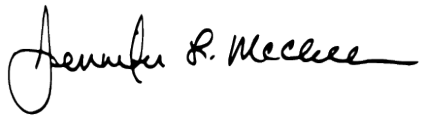
1. When did management first become aware of the listeria risk at the Jarratt facility? Why was action not taken earlier to prevent a widespread outbreak?
2. What processes were in place to control the risk of food contamination by listeria and other pathogens at the Jarratt facility?
3. After the failures that resulted in this devastating outbreak, what additional safeguards will be implemented moving forward?

[1] https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/death-toll-now-8-listeria-outbreak-tied-boars-113223877
[2] https://www.fsis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_file/documents/Non-Compliance_Reports-812023-To-822024.pdf
[3] https://www.fda.gov/food/foodborne-pathogens/listeria-listeriosis

4. Why did many of the violations cited in FSIS noncompliance records continue to occur repeatedly over several months? Why were permanent corrective measures not taken?
5. In the months leading up to the listeria outbreak, were FSIS inspectors present at the Jarratt facility at least once per each 8-hour shift, as required by federal food safety regulations?
6. Since listeria infections can take up to 10 weeks to become apparent, what steps will Boar's Head take to ensure the public is aware of the ongoing risk?

It is imperative that comprehensive changes are made to ensure that workplace conditions meet the highest standards. Americans in the Fourth District and across the country must be able to trust that the products manufactured in Jarratt are safe for consumption.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress