



## 2021 Legislative Priority

### Issue:

State budget – fund additional meat inspectors for BOAH, protect k-12 education funding and broadband grants for unserved areas.

### Background:

The 2021 legislative session is a budget year for the Indiana General Assembly. Requesting funds for various rural needs and issues is difficult during a normal budget year, but COVID-19 has created a much more challenging situation with budget shortfalls and cuts across the board.

With that in mind, Indiana Farm Bureau will move forward with advocating for rural issues including increased funding for meat inspections for small and medium processing plants and K-12 education.

### Story Points:

- With COVID-19 causing such a disruption on meat processing facilities and the food supply, the Board of Animal Health needs additional funding to expand meat inspection staff to ensure local processing of value-added products can move forward.
- K-12 education, especially in rural areas, needs to be funded to overcome unique challenges of geographic area, teacher shortages and availability of broadband to students who are forced into virtual learning. This goal aligns intentionally with INFB's #1 priority of expanding highspeed broadband to our members who are unserved and underserved.
- More schools are turning to referendums and inequitably increasing property tax burdens to make up for the loss in state funding to rural schools.
  - These shortcomings are placing a larger burden on local property owners who are left to make up for funding deficits through capital project and operating cost referendums.
- Research, education and technology are important for the future of the ag industry.
- Build on the success of the Next Level Communications strategy but expand to areas that may be served but are woefully underserved.

### Key Message/ Ask:

- Please support funding for expanded meat inspectors that will expand processing capacity without any investment in new equipment.
- Please fund programs to close Indiana's digital divide that disadvantages economic and educational opportunities in rural areas.
- Please maintain strong funding for k-12 public schools that are facing numerous challenges from COVID and declining ADM (average daily membership).