



February 5, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

I write on behalf of the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) and its 2,500 members representing approximately 25,000 physical store locations in North Carolina, and our grocery division, the Carolinas Food Industry Council. Our grocers were recently disappointed by your remarks at South Carolina's First in the Nation Dinner on January 27, 2024, that American consumers were tired of being "played for suckers" by higher prices on eggs, milk, chicken, gas, and other essential items.

The grocery industry is one of the most competitive marketplaces in both the retail sector and in the economy in general. Food retailers, which not only include chain and independent grocery stores but also mass merchants, pharmacies, convenience and discount stores, serve their communities throughout the year, are the largest donors to their local food banks, are the first to assist in a time of natural disasters, serve SNAP and WIC recipients and provide good paying jobs.

There are many external factors that have gone into increased food prices including the impact of avian flu on eggs, the price of aluminum on beverages, the impact of conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza on wheat and oil, higher wages and energy prices, and increased shoplifting just to name a few. Despite these pressures, the inflation for food-at-home (grocery store or supermarket food purchases) is up just 1.3% from January of 2023, according to Federal Reserve Economic Data, January Release, data through December 31, 2023.

Your attention to these increased pressures on the grocery market is most appreciated to ensure these critical businesses can continue serving their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andy Ellen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Andy' and the last name 'Ellen' clearly legible.

Andy Ellen
President and General Counsel
North Carolina Retail Merchants Association

cc: US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack
Senator Ted Budd
Senator Thom Tillis
Representative Alma Adams
Representative Dan Bishop
Representative Don Davis
Representative Chuck Edwards
Representative Valerie Foushee
Representative Virginia Foxx
Representative Richard Hudson
Representative Kathy Manning
Representative Patrick McHenry
Representative Greg Murphy
Representative Wiley Nickel
Representative Deborah Ross
Representative David Rouzer