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Restructuring Education Department Threatens FFA and Vo-Tech Programs

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - Changes proposed last year to curtail FFA and other vocational agriculture programs may be resurfacing under new efforts to restructure the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Missouri Farm Bureau President Charles Kruse sent a letter to the governor and commissioner of DESE explaining Farm Bureau has "serious concerns about the future of career and technical education (CTE)" based on a vague department reorganization chart released last month. The chart raises more questions than it provides answers.

"It remains unclear if DESE will continue to provide staff support for CTE and student organizations, if Perkins Act funding authorized and appropriated by U.S. Congress will continue to be used for its intended purpose, and if CTE and the allied student organizations fit within your vision for a new streamlined DESE," Kruse stated in the letter.

With members in every county, Missouri Farm Bureau has a vested interest in issues affecting the lives of member families and access to quality education is one of those issues. Kruse said Farm Bureau believes CTE programs and the supporting student organizations are essential to retooling Missouri's workforce for a 21st century economy. "We should be developing ways to enhance agricultural education and FFA, as well as other CTE programs; any attempt to weaken these programs is unacceptable," Kruse said.

In an effort to ensure transparency in the restructuring process, Farm Bureau is urging the Board of Education to hold public meetings across the state prior to making any restructuring decisions.