

Rita Martens
Winterset, Iowa

September 23, 2026

The Honorable Ashley Hinson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ashley,

I am writing not only as an Iowan, but as one of your high school English teachers and the wife of a farmer. I remember you as a talented musician and a dedicated student. In fact, I was so impressed by you that I asked you to play violin at my wedding. That makes this letter especially difficult to write.

I am disappointed and angry that Iowa farm families have been asked to absorb the damage from political decisions, like tariffs, made far from the farm. These are not abstract policy debates to my family. They affect planting decisions, operating loans, equipment repairs, and whether farmers can plan with any confidence at all.

Because my husband farms, I know how quickly economic policy reaches rural Iowa. When you supported President Trump and his tariffs, the consequences did not stay in Washington. They landed on farmers who had no seat at the table and no control over the fallout. They showed up in grain prices that were, at times, below the cost of production, in tense conversations with lenders, in postponed equipment purchases, and in the anger and worry that come from watching years of hard work put at risk by reckless trade policy.

Tariffs reduced demand for U.S. agricultural products, particularly soybeans and pork, and pushed buyers toward competitors such as Brazil and Argentina. The Iowa State University Center for Agriculture and Rural Development reports that the trade disruption caused by the tariffs cost Iowa soybean producers \$545 million in revenue and Iowa pork producers \$776 million. That meant lower farm products and more risk at the same time costs for seed, fertilizer, equipment, fuel, and credit kept climbing.

The results of Trump's tariffs which you supported surprised few of the farmers I know. Broadcasters on farm radio talked about it, market forecasters warned about it, and politicians discussed it. Certainly, you knew about the impact these tariffs would have.

This leads me to question your commitment to your constituents. Do you support tariffs because you think they might somehow help farmers? Or do you support the tariffs because you want to align with President Trump, thereby enhancing your political clout? Unfortunately, I think the answer is the latter. Despite seeing the negative impact tariffs have had on farmers, you continue to support them, describing them as "a long-term strategy" to produce fairer trade conditions and open new export markets (Des Moines Register, Oct. 5, 2026).

Under most circumstances, I'm happy to support my former students. But I'm afraid I can't vote for you this November. Farmers deserve policies that enhance their markets, respect their work, and give rural communities the chance to thrive.

Sincerely,

Rita Penney Martens

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Iowan for Decency

