



July 21, 2020

Senator Bill Dodd
Chair
Senate Government Organization Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 1248 (Garcia/Caballero)—SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Dodd,

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) has represented small and mid-scale family farmers in California for over 40 years, seeking to preserve family-scale agriculture and promote environmental sustainability. We write today in strong support for AB 1248 by Assemblymember Garcia and Senator Caballero.

For two decades CAFF has been promoting local food in California, operating the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign in various regions of the state. Local food purchasing strengthens the rural economy and has wide economic multiplier effects.

We have supported numerous legislative efforts over the years to require state institutions, universities, and schools to purchase food from California suppliers and these efforts have regularly met opposition due to concerns over costs. Despite these attempts, school districts buy canned peaches from China or produce from Central America, regions that have much lower regulatory and environmental standards for agriculture.

Previous legislative efforts continue to provide too many loopholes for purchasing outside California. During the pandemic, we need greater investments than ever in the state's farmers and regional economies, particularly investments in small and historically underserved farms. And we need public institutions to model this, through requirements for technical assistance and financial incentives.

We support the critical investments in California Grown advanced by AB 1248 for two primary reasons. First, the state continues to require farmers and the food industry to adhere to ever stricter environmental rules and increasing minimum wages and benefits, which is not true in most competing regions. Allowing California institutions to focus only on price tends to undercut these efforts rather than supporting and rewarding local producers. Second, feeding people higher quality food makes them healthier, better able to learn, and

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calmer and less disruptive. This has been shown now in numerous studies and has led the health care industry to increasingly emphasize healthy food as a solution to physical and mental issues.

As the bill advances, we'd encourage additional consideration of efforts to invest in farmers that have been the most historically marginalized, particularly socially disadvantaged farmers of color, and to provide additional benefits and incentives for public institutions to purchase products grown in California.

For these reasons, CAFF strongly supports AB 1248.

Sincerely,



David Runsten
Policy Director

cc: Members, Senate Government Organization Committee
Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (principal author)
Senator Anna Caballero (principal coauthor)