



March 15, 2022

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7320
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 907 (Pan) L.E.A.F.: Local, Equitable, Affordable Food - SUPPORT

Dear Dr. Pan,

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) supports your SB 907, which would establish a non-competitive grant program to expand access to Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) services at all certified farmers markets across California. CAFF currently represents over 8,000 small and mid-scale family farmers in California and have worked for over 40 years to preserve family-scale agriculture and promote environmental sustainability. We work to build sustainable food and farming systems through policy, advocacy and on-the-ground programs that create more resilient family farms, communities, and ecosystems.

Individuals and families that rely on the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as CalFresh in California, are issued an EBT card to access their food benefits electronically. The current EBT system presents many hurdles that often prevent farmers' markets from accepting EBT cards (e.g. requiring the farmers' market manager to become an authorized USDA SNAP retailer). Farmers' markets that do offer EBT access typically find that additional administrative and technical assistance – a dedicated employee who can help with accounting and reporting – is needed to fully reap the benefits of EBT access. According to recent research published in the American Journal of Health Promotion, there was a 38 percent decrease in weekly SNAP transactions at farmers' markets with an unpaid volunteer managing these services compared to those with a paid staffer. Because administrative costs can add up and farmers' markets operate on such thin margins, many farmers' markets do not go through the process of offering EBT access.

SB 907 would establish a non-competitive grant program, jointly developed by the Department of Social Services and the Department of Food and Agriculture, to support EBT access and staffing at farmers' markets. Grant funding could also be used to scale and improve EBT processes at existing farmers' markets, establish EBT access at new certified markets in under-served low-income communities, assist non-certified farmers' markets with certification, and develop nutrition education programs and outreach efforts to local communities.

Farmers' markets are an important source of low-cost, fresh fruits and vegetables for Californians in need of food assistance, and increasing EBT access at farmers' markets will improve nutritional opportunities in areas of California where food deserts are prevalent. Additionally, for small and mid-sized farming operations, farmers' markets provide an important economic opportunity – a viable, local outlet for the sale of their produce.

The grant program established under SB 907 will help improve access to healthy foods for all California families, regardless of income, as well as increase the number of farmers' markets throughout the state. We believe that every Californian should have equal access to local, affordable nutritious food. For these reasons, CAFF supports SB 907 and thanks you for introducing this important measure.

Sincerely,

Jamie Fanous
Senior Policy Advocate & Organizer
Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J Fanous".

CC: Marlon Lara, Office of Senator Dr. Pan (Author)
Tiffany Germain, NextGen California (Sponsor)
Sam Greenlee and Emma Burke, Alchemist CDC (Sponsor)