



Carbon Cycle Institute



April 23, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senate President pro Tem Toni G. Atkins
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted via electronic mail

**RE: Supporting California's Schools and Small Farmers - FY 2020-21 Budget -
SUPPORT**

Dear Governor Newsom, pro Tem Atkins and Speaker Rendon:

We are grateful for your thoughtful and steadfast leadership as California faces an unprecedented public health crisis, and many people experience extreme hardship from healthcare to economic impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this difficult time, the undersigned organizations are writing to express our support for the schools that have stepped up to feed our kids and communities, and the farmers and ranchers who continue to put food on plates across the state.

While circumstances have changed significantly since the Governor proposed to increase funding for school food back in January, the need for these additional resources has become even more acute. State investments in healthy, sustainable school food will meet urgent needs resulting from COVID-19, as well as increase our resilience in future crises, which are likely to become more frequent with climate change.

To ensure that our most vulnerable children do not go hungry and that California's small- and mid-sized farms survive this crisis and gain access to stable markets in the long term, we urge you to prioritize school food funding in the FY2020-21 budget, including funding for:

- CDFA's Office of Farm to Fork, to build relationships between schools and local foodsheds
- A Farm-to-School Grant Program that will support California's small- and mid-sized farmers
- Training for school food service staff
- Universal provision of school meals

Investing in school food is especially wise in the midst of the COVID-19 health crisis. Schools are feeding millions of food insecure children, and farmer livelihoods are threatened by massive losses as institutional supply chains close.

With adequate resources, schools can serve as hubs for emergency supply chains, and once they are built, also have the capacity to serve communities on a broader basis. In fact, vibrant regional food supply chains are essential to community food security and economic stability, particularly in times of crisis.

Whether the challenge we face is a public health pandemic, wildfires, drought or other climate-related impacts, investment in the creation of strong community feeding programs for the most food insecure, along with local and regional produce supply chains throughout California will boost community resiliency in the near- and long-term.

From an economic standpoint, local and regional food supply chains offer an important stabilizing effect. They deliver widespread economic benefits to small- and mid-scale producers - California's most at-risk farmers - while also increasing equity, health, and food access.

In addition, Farm-to-School programs benefit not only farmers and ranchers, but also food processors and food manufacturers by opening doors to a robust institutional market. Most importantly, Farm-to-School sourcing has the power to provide all California schoolkids access to nutritious, high-quality, local food so they are ready to learn and thrive. This is especially the case if the Farm-to-School programs support California's organic farmers, who produce healthy food without toxic pesticides.

Thank you for ensuring that taxpayer dollars go as far as possible to support health, food security, farmer economic stability and community resiliency through food. This is an important moment in our state to increase investment in our school food system to support healthy children and California's small- and mid-sized farmers.

Sincerely,

Abre' Conner, Staff Attorney
Kathy Sher, Legislative Advocate
ACLU Foundation of Northern California and
ACLU of California

Patricia Carrillo, Executive Director
Agriculture & Land Based Training Association
(ALBA)

Tom Frantz, President
Association of Irrigated Residents

Ched Myers, Co-Director
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Sabrina Hall, Community Member
Bayview Hunters Point Mothers and
Fathers

Rebekah Weber, Policy Director
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)

Jane Williams, Executive Director
California Communities Against Toxics

Lorena Garcia Zermeno, Policy and
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California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

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California State Grange

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Californians for Pesticide Reform

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Caroline Cox, Senior Scientist
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Central California Asthma Collaborative

Nayamin Martinez, Director
Central California Environmental Justice
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Cathryn Couch, CEO
Ceres Community Project

Dave Runsten, Policy Director
Community Alliance of Family Farmers (CAFF)

Judi Shils, Executive Director
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Jan Dietrick, Executive Director
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology

Dolores Huerta, President
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Bill Allayaud, California Director of Government
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Environmental Working Group

Pastor Trena Turner, Executive Director
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Jessica Craven, Steering Committee Co-Chair
Feminists in Action Los Angeles

Yuka Nagashima, Executive Director
Food Shift

Jim Lindburg, Legislative Director
Friends Committee on Legislation of California

Kari Hamerschlag, Deputy Director
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Greenfield Union School District

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Moms Advocating Sustainability

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Medha Chandra, Organizer and Policy Advocate
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Sustainable St. Helena an Environmental
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The Edible Schoolyard Project

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Valley Improvement Projects (VIP)

Jackie Cole, Principle Consultant
Veritable Good

Janus Matthes, Board member
Wine & Water Watch

cc: Senator Holly J. Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget Committee
Assembly Member Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Senator Bob Wieckowski, Chair, Senate Budget Sub. No. 2
Assembly Member Richard Bloom, Chair, Assembly Budget Sub. No. 3
Senator Richard D. Roth, Chair, Senate Budget Sub. No. 1
Assembly Member Kevin McCarty, Assembly Budget Sub. No. 2
First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom
Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Karen Ross, Secretary, California Department of Food and Agriculture
Tom Steyer, Co-Chair, Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery
Ann O'Leary, Co-Chair, Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery