

November 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Speaker:

The undersigned organizations write to you today to express our strong support for Congressman Jim Costa as the Chair of the House Agriculture Committee for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. The loss of Chairman Collin Peterson is felt by the food and agriculture sectors, and his leadership will be greatly missed. As a 16-year veteran of Congress and third-generation farmer, we believe that Congressman Costa possesses the experience and leadership adeptness needed to carry the Committee and its important work forward.

These have not been easy times for our nation or industry. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated many frailties within our society, not least among them the challenges that our food system faces. The House Agriculture Committee will not only play a vital role in the needs of producers who grow our food but also how we maximize access to it. We are confident that Congressman Costa will lead on these issues to the benefit of American farmers, ranchers, communities, and families.

Congressman Costa represents the 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of California, which is a microcosm of the American food system and is also one of its linchpins. The 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District encompasses parts of Fresno, Madera and Merced counties, which, combined, produced over \$12 billion in farm gate value in 2018 and would place those three counties as the eighth largest agricultural producing state in the nation. At the same time, Congressman Costa also represents many small and medium sized towns that are emblematic of rural towns across America and face distinct challenges of their own. All these factors combine to give Congressman Costa a particularly unique perspective on how we can harness the great strengths of our agricultural system to both grow and nourish our communities.

Fresno is California's fifth largest city and one that has some of the highest levels of nutritional needs in the country. With nearly 25% of his own constituency participating in programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Congressman understands the critical importance of increasing access to safe and nutritious food. During his 16 years on the House Agriculture Committee, he has strongly advocated for the preservation and expansion of our nation's nutrition programs that serve the most vulnerable in our society.

The Congressman also brings a keen understanding of the importance that foreign markets play in strengthening our industry. The last four years have brought some successes, along with many

challenges, in not only maintaining access to foreign markets but also expanding them. Congressman Costa's extensive work as Chair of the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture, and with the Trans-Atlantic Partnership and other important foreign government caucuses, affords him the ability to strongly advocate for U.S. agriculture's presence in foreign markets.

Additionally, Congressman Costa has and continues to be a strong champion for issues surrounding the agricultural workforce and the need for immigration reform. In addition to having a deep and personal understanding of the dignity and respect that those who pick, pack, and ship our food deserve, Congressman Costa also grasps the dynamics of agricultural innovation and can appropriately differentiate between needed research investments and agricultural workforce retraining opportunities.

Further, it is important to emphasize Congressman Costa's deep understanding of agriculture's relationship with our nation's natural resources. He understands what science and logic tell us: our working lands – primarily farms, ranches and forests – are the main weapons in our arsenal against the externalities brought about by a changing climate. Congressman Costa's strong advocacy of increased funding for on-farm conservation programs, like the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, is the perfect example of how we can leverage public and private dollars to achieve agreeable solutions.

We deeply respect each Congressional Representative who will be considered for the important role of Chair and stand ready to work with the next House Agriculture Chair in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

It is our strong belief that Congressman Costa is uniquely qualified to take on this responsibility. We have seen firsthand the dedicated work and lasting impacts he has made to California agriculture and rural communities and are confident that he would carry this leadership forward to further develop agriculture policy throughout the nation. We hope that he will receive every consideration for the role that he is due.

Sincerely,

African American Farmers of California  
Agricultural Council of California  
Almond Alliance  
American Olive Oil Producers Association  
American Pistachio Growers  
Asian Business Institute & Research Center  
California Agricultural Aircraft Association  
California Agricultural Irrigation  
Association  
California Alfalfa and Forage Association  
California Apple Commission  
California Association of Pest Control  
Advisers

California Association of Winegrape  
Growers  
California Bean Shippers Association  
California Blueberry Association  
California Blueberry Commission  
California Cattlemen's Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Cotton Ginners and Growers  
Association  
California Cut Flower Commission  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Farmworker Foundation  
California Fresh Fruit Association  
California Grain and Feed Association

California Pork Producers Association  
California Poultry Federation  
California Rice Commission  
California Rice Industry Association  
California Seed Association  
California State Beekeepers Association  
California State Floral Association  
California Strawberry Commission  
California Table Grape Commission  
California Tomato Growers Association  
California Trucking Association  
California Walnut Commission  
California Warehouse Association  
California Wheat Growers Association  
California Women for Agriculture  
Certified American Grown  
Charleston Drainage District  
Family Farm Alliance  
Friant Water Authority  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central  
California  
Growing Coachella Valley  
Imperial Irrigation District  
Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers  
Association

Kee Kitayama Research Foundation  
Mercy Springs Water District  
Milk Producers Council  
Nisei Farmers League  
Northern California Water Association  
Northwest Chicken Council  
Olive Growers Council of California  
Pacific Coast Renders Association  
Pacific Egg and Poultry Association  
Panoche Drainage District  
Panoche Water District  
Plant California Alliance  
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust  
Sweetpotato Council of California  
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority  
Turlock Irrigation District  
United Ag  
United Water Conservation District  
Western Agricultural Processors Association  
Western Growers Association  
Western Plant Health Association  
Western United Dairymen  
Wine Institute

CC:  
Members, Democratic Steering and Policy Committee  
Blue Dog Coalition  
California Congressional Delegation  
Governor Gavin Newsom  
Secretary Karen Ross