November 12, 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 117th 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 16th Congressional District of California, which is a microcosm of the American food system and is also one of its linchpins. The 16th 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 117th 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
California Agricultural Aircraft Association
California Agricultural Irrigation Association
California Alfalfa and Forage Association
California Apple Commission
California Association of Pest Control Advisers
California Bean Shippers Association
California Blueberry Association
California Blueberry Commission
California Cattlemen's Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
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
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
Mercy Springs Water District
Milk Producers Council
Nisei Farmers League
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
Sweetpotato Council of California
Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority
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