Healthy Food, Healthy People, Healthy Economy

Note: Not all organizations who signed on in support have logos. The list at the end of this letter is comprehensive.
February 19, 2015

The Honorable Shirley Weber, PhD
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California Nutrition Incentives Act – Support

Dear Assemblymember Weber:

The undersigned 129 agriculture, anti-hunger, rural, faith, labor, anti-poverty, food policy council, economic development and farmers’ market organizations respectfully urge the leadership of the Assembly Budget Committee to support the establishment of the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program through the 2015-16 state budget. This budget proposal has multiple common sense co-benefits of maximizing California’s share of federal matching funds, improving the health of low-income Californians, and supporting California’s farming communities and small business owners.

A modest investment of $5 million per fiscal year in the Nutrition Incentive Matching (NIM) Grant Program is built on four years of evidence-based success through California Market Match, a pilot that doubles the value of nutrition assistance benefits when beneficiaries purchase fruits, nuts and vegetables at more than 100 farmers’ markets across the state. Securing general fund monies for NIM leverages new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the Farm Bill. Only $69 million of FINI’s $100 million remains and California should maximize its share considering the state’s unparalleled agricultural bounty, vast network of farmers’ markets and entrenched poverty.

A statewide incentive program would also unlock FINI dollars more equitably, to areas in California a Market Match program has never existed. Despite regaining its status as the world’s 8th largest economy, California still tops national rankings as the state with the highest poverty rate. Limited resources for purchasing food has a dramatic impact on health and the risk of developing chronic diseases, like diabetes. This disproportionately impacts communities of color and is a critical factor in widening racial and ethnic health disparities. The NIM grant program would serve as an anti-poverty and anti-hunger measure by addressing the economic factors driving food disparities while simultaneously increasing access to affordable, healthy produce. By making healthy foods more affordable and readily available, the NIM grant program could help control rising healthcare costs for many Medi-Cal enrollees.

Scaling up this program, with the support of FINI, also directly benefits our state’s small- and mid-sized farmers. The inclusion of a pilot for small retailers will only expand the reach of this incentive model to those without access to a farmer’s market. A 2013 evaluation of California Market Match reported a six-fold return, and is a local economic development strategy for farming communities and small business owners up and down the state. It’s a win-win for California’s people and its local businesses.

We urge you to build for the future by scaling up this evidence-based nutrition incentive program of the present. A $5 million NIM Grant Program, matched with $5 million from USDA, could boost healthy food access to $45 million for almost 300,000 families and generate hundreds of new farm jobs.

Sincerely,

Ecology Center
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

Public Health Institute
Roots of Change
San Diego Hunger Coalition
ACT for Women and Girls
Agricultural Institute of Marin
Alchemist Community Development Corporation
Aroma Orchids
Avitua Farms
Bernard Ranches
Bill’s Bees
Bloomfield Organics
Buon Gusto Farms
Buenrostro Farms
Burkart Farms
Cabral’s Farm
California Alliance of Farmers’ Markets
California Association of Food Banks
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)
California Convergence
California Food Policy Advocates
California Food Policy Council
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Partnership
California Teamsters Public Affairs Council
Cardenas Farm
Castellanos Farm
Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Center for Food Safety
Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)
Certified Farmers’ Market Management Charles R. Drew University of Medicine & Science Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
Coleman Family Farm
Community Health Councils, Inc.
Community Services Unlimited
Contra Costa Certified Farmers’ Markets
Echo Park Gathering of Elders and Caregivers
EnrichLA
Etheridge Farm
Farm to EVERY Fork
Feldyee Horse Farm
Finley Farms Organic
Flora Bella Farms
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food for People, Inc.
Fresh Approach
Friends in Deed
Friend’s Ranches, Inc.
Full Belly Farm
Gama Farms
Garcia Organic Farms
Gaytan Family Farm
Gean Farm, Inc.
Grace Gonzalez (individual)
Ha’s Apple Farm
Haussler Organic Farms
Her Produce
Inland Valley Hope Partners
Inner City Struggle
Jack Balderama (individual)
Jewish Family Services of Los Angeles
Jimenez Family Farm
JF Organic Farms
J’s Lone Daughter Ranch
Kennedy Farm
Ken’s Top Notch Produce
Los Angeles Community Action Network
Los Angeles County HIV Drug & Alcohol Task Force
L.A. Green Grounds
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Maggie’s Farm
Maria Durazo (individual)
Mar Vista Farmers’ Market Association
Maternal and Child Health Access
MAZON
Milliken Family Farms
North Coast Growers Association
Novy Ranches
Ocean Breez Int.
One Generation
Pacific Coast Farmers’ Market Association
Pama Valley Citrus
Phat Beets Produce
PolicyLink
Polito Family Farms
Prevention Institute
Project Angel Food
Project Plateful
Rair Hills
Raphael Cardenas Farms
R.C. Farms
Regier Family Farms
Rincon del Mar Ranch
Rivas Farms
Rock Canyon Vineyards
Rodriquez Family Farm
Russell Family Farms
Santa Monica Democratic Club
Santa Monica Farmers Market
Schaner Farms
Sebastopol Farmers’ Market
Slow Food California
Social Justice Learning Institute
Spring Hill Cheese
Sprouts of Promise
St. Anthony Foundation
Strategic Alliance
Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA)
Sycamore Hill Ranch
Tamai Family Farms
Thai Community Development Center
Thao’s Farm
The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)

cc: Todd Bland, CDSS
Martha Guzman-Aceves, Governor’s Office Secretary Karen Ross, CDFA

The Children’s Clinic
The Farmers Guild
The Garment Worker Center
The LA Human Right to Housing Collective
The Wellington Square Certified Farmers Market
Trevino Farms
Valley Center Growers, Inc.
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Windrose Farm
Women’s Council of the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers
Women Organizing Resources, Knowledge & Services (WORKS)
Wong Farms LLC