



March 27, 2019

The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry  
State Capitol, Room 5144  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 958 (Aguiar-Curry) Organic-to-School Pilot – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry:

The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is a statewide organization that represents both farmers and non-farm allies who support sustainable food and farming policies and the long-term viability of California agriculture. CAFF is pleased to your co-sponsor your AB 958, which would provide funding through CDFAs' Farm to Fork office for public schools to purchase California-grown organic food.

CAFF has supported organic farmers since the early 1980s. For 20 years we published the National Organic Directory. We are members of the national Organic Farmers Association. We believe that organic farming, because of its emphasis on soil-building and other regenerative practices, is a potentially sustainable agricultural system. However, organic production, because it foregoes the use of synthetic chemicals, usually costs more than the conventional alternative. As a result, organic food often has a price premium and is more commonly found in high-end stores and restaurants.

We are often asked how organic food can be made available to low-income populations. AB 958 is a step in that direction. By focusing on public schools with high percentages of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals, this bill would provide funding to encourage food service directors to choose organics when the price differential is not too great. Many of these children obtain a large proportion of their nutrition from school meals and so it is important that studies have shown that organic produce has lower chemical residues than conventional produce and that shifting to organic food can lower pesticide levels in people's bodies. Leveraging institutional purchasing to provide more organic food for these children can only benefit them.

Several thousand California farmers are certified organic. CAFF operates a program that assists schools in sourcing produce from California farmers and we have often found that the price differential between conventional and organic is not that great and that many schools are inclined to purchase organic. AB 958 will further encourage low-income schools to include organics to the benefit of both farmers and students.

CAFF appreciates your introduction of AB 958 and we commit to work with you and CDFA to make this effort successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Runsten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Runsten  
Policy Director