

August 16, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Conaway  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway, Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

We write you in support of retaining in the conference agreement Section 12622 of H.R. 2, as passed in the Senate. H.R. 2, the *Agriculture Improvement Act*, provides certainty for our farmers and ranchers, strengthens our food and nutrition programs, and provides critical investment in rural America.

Section 12622 of the Senate-passed bill requires the Secretary of Agriculture to fully enforce the existing Buy American requirements applicable to domestic food assistance programs administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Further, the provision would require the Secretary to report to Congress within 180 days on actions taken by the Department to meet the existing Buy American requirements.

Despite Congress first passing the Buy American provision regarding school food purchases in 1988, the Congressional intent has been thwarted since the Buy American provision has been largely unenforced by USDA over the last 30 years. Today, over 80 percent of the apple juice purchased by schools is from China, 60-70 percent of the fish sticks served in schools are made from fish caught on Russian vessels and processed in China, and schools in more than half of the country, (including the two largest peach producing states), have purchased Chinese canned peaches. We have recently started to document an increase of grass-fed beef entering our school feeding programs from South America.

America's farmers, ranchers, and seafood producers serve as the backbone of our economy, and it is imperative that federal policies continue to promote an economically healthy and competitive U.S. agriculture sector. Today, many of the food products that are being displaced by foreign-sourced products in our schools face retaliatory tariffs from other countries. Ironically, taxpayer funds continue to be spent buying food products from China while USDA officials work to mitigate losses to U.S. producers. The U.S. produces the safest and highest quality food in the world under the most stringent laws and regulations. Not only do our children

deserve the best food, but also American taxpayers deserve to know that their funds are used to support U.S. jobs and businesses. Section 12622 is a provision that is truly a win-win and strengthens the overall goals of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Thank you for your hard work and diligence, and we look forward to a successful passage of a new five-year farm bill in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Council of California  
American AgCredit  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Mushroom Institute  
Apricot Producers of California  
At-sea Processors Association  
Burnette Foods  
California Canning Peach Association  
California Cherry Growers & Industry Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Date Commission  
California Dried Plum Board  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Fig Institute  
California Grain and Feed Association  
California League of Food Producers  
California Pear Growers Association  
California Seed Association  
California Strawberry Commission  
California Tomato Growers  
California Walnut Commission  
Cherry Marketing Institute  
Del Monte Foods  
Florida Farm Bureau  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Florida Tomato Exchange  
Gold Star Foods  
Gray & Company  
Knouse Foods  
MBG Marketing – The Blueberry People  
Michigan Apple Association

Michigan Farm Bureau  
Michigan Processing Apple Growers  
Michigan Processing Asparagus Growers  
Michigan State Horticultural Society  
Michigan Vegetable Council  
Midwest Food Producers Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.  
North American Blueberry Council  
Northwest Horticulture Council  
Pacific Coast Producers  
Pacific Northwest Canned Pear Service  
Pacific Seafood Processors Association  
Peterson Farms, Inc.  
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.  
San Luis Obispo Unified School District  
Seneca Foods  
Summer Prize Fruit Company  
Sunmaid Growers of California  
Sunsweet Growers, Inc.  
Tennessee Farmers Cooperative  
Titan Farms/Chalmers Carr  
Tree Top  
Trident Seafoods  
U.S. Apple Association  
Valley Fig Institute  
Wawona Frozen Foods  
Welch Foods, a Cooperative  
Western Growers Association  
Yuba City Unified School District

cc: Conference Committee Members