November 17, 2020

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association (CACASA) we strongly urge your support of Congressman Jim Costa of California’s 16th congressional district as the next Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

Specifically, Congressman Costa is a third-generation farmer from one of the most productive agricultural regions of the nation with a diversity of livestock and crops including grains and oilseeds, cotton, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, grapes, berries, nursery, greenhouse, cattle, dairy, sheep and poultry. Agricultural producers in his congressional district including parts of Fresno, Madera, and Merced counties, produce a combined market value of agricultural products sold of $4.5 billion (USDA-NASS, 2017). The 16th congressional district is among the top 17 congressional districts for agricultural production in the U.S.

Over the course of his 16 years serving in Congress, and particularly on the House Committee on Agriculture, Congressman Costa has become a trusted leader on issues impacting production agriculture, conservation, nutrition, and rural development. Twenty-four percent of residents in the 16th congressional district receive food assistance. Throughout his congressional career, up to, and including this current session of Congress, Congressman Costa has supported Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to low-income residents. Congressman Costa also helped build support and secure multiple-year funding for new medical clinics in rural towns like the City of Livingston in Merced county that has chronically suffered from lack of health care.

Congressman Costa’s experience and leadership as Chair of the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture has showcased his understanding of the complex biological nature of agriculture that impacts all segments of the U.S. food supply chain and international trade. U.S. agricultural trade can be impeded by trade barriers being erected by trading partners for plant and animal health risks if preventative government programs are not executed precisely and based on sound science. Early in his congressional career Congressman Costa authored Section 10201, Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). Since its enactment much-needed enhancements have been added to the protection of our nation’s food supply and environment. In addition, Chairman
Costa understands the vital role in facilitating trade of agricultural commodities domestically and internationally. With numerous seaports and an international border, California is a gateway to the U.S. for imports. But California is also a major exporter of agricultural products. Chairman Costa has first-hand knowledge of what it takes to facilitate the movement of agricultural products from production to their ultimate destination, including the certification of products destined for foreign ports. As Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, Congressman Costa’s deep experience and technical know-how can be instrumental in forthcoming negotiations to repair trade relationships.

Being a third-generation farmer Congressman Costa maintains a deep understanding of the multiple benefits of conservation programs. He has staunchly advocated for conservation programs that help producers sustainably farm their land, confront water demands and adapt to innovative climate smart practices. Congressman Costa understands that, “mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change will require a multi-pronged approach and common-sense.”

California, the leading U.S. state for cash farm receipts and over 13 percent of the nation's total agricultural value has not seen a California member as Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture since 1867. While we respect all members vying for the chairmanship, the bottom line is there is no one in the U.S. Congress better suited to lead the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture than Congressman Jim Costa. In addition to being uniquely qualified, he is dedicated to the prosperity of American agriculture and committed to doing so giving equally balanced consideration to the impacts on climate change and the environment. With the multiple and diverse constituencies in the food and agriculture industry and given debate on the next farm bill will begin in the 117th Congress, now more than ever we need a leader with the experience and talents like those of Congressman Jim Costa.

We ask that you give every consideration for Congressman Jim Costa as Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture and speak with other members of the U.S. House from across the nation about his unmatched qualifications.

Sincerely,

Josh Huntsinger
President

cc: Members, Democratic Steering and Policy Committee
Democratic Members, California Congressional Delegation