March 15, 2017

The Honorable Bill Dodd
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5064
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 276 (Dodd): Healthy Soils: Support

Dear Senator Dodd,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our support for Senate Bill 276, which ensures that the Healthy Soils Program and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program, two critical climate smart agriculture programs, are exempt from onerous reporting and outreach requirements that were inadvertently imposed on the two programs in last year’s SB 859.

In 2016, Senator Wolk authored SB 1350 for the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The bill defined “climate smart” agricultural activities including “healthy soils.” Numerous agricultural and environmental groups supported the bill.

Because SB 1350 dealt with GGRF funding, the bill was held in Senate Appropriations Committee. During subsequent budget negotiations, most of SB 1350 was inserted into a budget trailer bill, SB 859. The GGRF appropriations to CDFA were made in SB 830.

Throughout the end of the 2016 legislative session, there were ongoing deliberations over SB 1383 (Lara), the Short-Lived Climate Pollutant bill, which resulted in additional language being added to SB 859 that established sideboards for CDFA’s implementation of methane digester projects.
(Section 6 of SB 859). The $7.5 million allocations for both the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) and the Healthy Soils were inadvertently wrapped into the Section 6 requirements by not specifying that the requirements were intended for dairy digester projects alone, and not the other climate smart ag programs at CDFA.

SB 276 would ensure that the Healthy Soils Program and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program move forward and are not subject to requirements intended for dairy digester programs. This will allow farmers and ranchers to access resources to support soil management practices and irrigation management improvements that improve carbon sequestration, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide multiple environmental and health co-benefits.

We are pleased to support SB 276 and thank you for authoring this important measure.

Sincerely,

Ed Thompson, Jr.
California Director
American Farmland Trust

Kelly Damewood
Policy Director
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)

Jeanne Merrill
Policy Director
California Climate and Agriculture Network

Nick Lapis
Director of Advocacy
Californians Against Waste

Torri Estrada
Executive Director
Carbon Cycle Institute

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Janet E. Derecho
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John Wick
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Rex Dufour
Western Regional Office Director
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Dave Henson
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Margaret Reeves
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David S. Gates, Jr.
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Ridge Vineyards, Inc.

Michael Dimock
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Sopac McCarthy Mulholland
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President and CEO
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Kris Beal
Executive Director
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Jo Ann Baumgartner
Director
Wild Farm Alliance