



## The Senate of The State of Texas

October 6, 2020

The Honorable  
Greg Abbott  
Governor of Texas  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

We write to respectfully request your intervention to avert potentially devastating cuts to the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Surplus Agricultural Products Grant program, which would negatively affect not only Texans struggling to make ends meet during this crisis, but also farmers throughout the state.

The acute and protracted economic effects of the pandemic led to massively increased demand for food banks' services—more than doubled, in most cases. In fact, their ability to transform operations rapidly and expand their capacity to feed our communities has been nothing short of miraculous. With the virus persisting and many Texans unemployed, demand for food bank assistance has not subsided. Our support for their efforts cannot waver, either.

The Surplus Agricultural Products Grant is an extraordinarily efficient and cost-effective program, allowing food banks to obtain and distribute surplus or otherwise-unsellable produce to hungry Texans while reducing food waste and paying farmers for a larger share of their crops. The upside is enormous, in fact: Each dollar appropriated translates to eight pounds of fresh Texan produce for those who need it most.

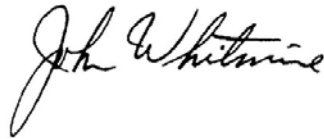
Because of the nature of TDA's funding, however, the program is severely impacted by the mandated five percent cuts to the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget. The proposed cut, \$1.9 million, represents 44 percent of the program's annual funding. It also translates to 15.2 million pounds of produce likely going to waste instead of to Texans that need it. Given our current financial position, some belt-tightening undoubtedly is warranted and necessary, but it should not come at the expense of Texans struggling to put food on the table for their families.

As members of the Texas Senate, we respectfully request your assistance as we work together to mitigate the worst effects of this pandemic and the economic calamity that accompanied it. We pray that the Lord will bless you, protect you, and inspire you to do what's best for our mutual constituents. Please call upon us whenever we may be of assistance.

Respectfully,



Judith Zaffirini  
State Senator, District 21



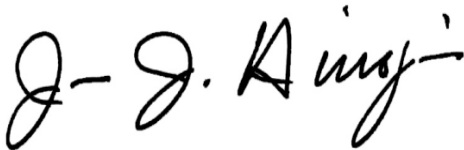
John Whitmire  
State Senator, District 15



Eddie Lucio Jr.  
State Senator, District 27



Royce West  
State Senator, District 23



Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa  
State Senator, District 20



Kel Seliger  
State Senator, District 31



Joan Huffman  
State Senator, District 17



José Rodríguez  
State Senator, District 29



Donna Campbell  
State Senator, District 25



Brandon Creighton  
State Senator, District 4



Charles Perry  
State Senator, District 28



Lois Kolkhorst  
State Senator, District 18



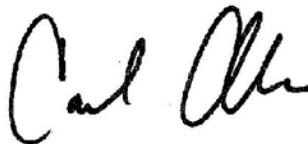
José Menéndez  
State Senator, District 26



Borris Miles  
State Senator, District 13



Pete Flores  
State Senator, District 19



Carol Alvarado  
State Senator, District 6



Nathan Johnson  
State Senator, District 16



Angela Paxton  
State Senator, District 8



Beverly Powell  
State Senator, District 10



Sarah Eckhardt  
State Senator, District 14

XC: The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor of Texas  
The Honorable Sid Miller, Commissioner of Agriculture