

# **CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE**

*Informational Hearing*

**Senate Committee on Agriculture**  
**Senator Cathleen Galgiani, Chair**

## ***The Future of California Agricultural Education and UC Cooperative Extension***

State Capitol, Sacramento  
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**SENATOR CATHLEEN GALGIANI:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Senate Agriculture Committee's informational hearing on the *Future of California Agricultural Education and UC Cooperative Extension*.

California leads the nation in agricultural productivity, where in 2012 the farm gate value for ag products was \$44.7 billion. But despite this growing market, California is consistently faced with challenges. We are currently in a severe and dangerous drought that calls for additional storage solutions. We're also continuously faced with the threat of new pests and diseases, and the rising age of the average California farmer calls for the development and training of the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural leaders.

These challenges can only be addressed through the development and continued support of agricultural education. This hearing will address ag education in two parts. The first will focus on the education of future

agricultural leaders through high school educational programs, and the second will focus on the work and expertise provided to farmers and to the community through the UC Cooperative Extension Program.

High school agricultural education provides the opportunity for our children to gain real-world knowledge and skills applicable to careers in ag business, science, engineering, and other areas affecting food, fiber, and natural resources. Today, we will discuss the value of high school agricultural education and the impact on this program if existing funding sources are reallocated.

On the other end of the ag education spectrum, the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources' Cooperative Extension is a valuable resource for all of California. The second part of today's hearing will provide an update as to the current status of Cooperative Extension, given that it has endured significant budget cuts over the last decade. We will discuss future progress toward rebuilding the program and hear testimony from current advisors and farmers as to the impact of Cooperative Extension in the community.

For everyone here today, thank you for your attendance, and I look forward to our discussion.

With that, I would like to invite our first panel to come forward. Mr. Russell Weikle, Career and College Transition Division Director, California Department of Education; Kimberly Leahy from the California Department of Finance; and Natasha Collins from the Legislative Analyst's Office.

While Mr. Weikle comes forward, I would like to invite anyone interested in providing testimony during the public comment period to please sign in with the sergeants.

Welcome and thank you.

**MR. RUSSELL WEIKLE:** Good morning. My name is Russell Weikle. I'm the director of the Career and College Transition Division of the California Department of Education.

The Agriculture Incentive Grant Program originated with a previous Senate bill, 813, the Hughes-Hart Education Reform Act of 1983, in response to industry demands to improve agricultural education at the high school level in California. Since the inception of the program, measurable statewide achievements have been accomplished in agricultural education. Since 1991, the California Association of Future Farmers of America has won the State of the Year Award 11 times. Forty-three percent of agricultural courses now meet the UC A-G entrance requirements; 75 percent of all graduating agricultural education seniors attend postsecondary education after high school; and enrollment in ag classes has actually grown to nearly double in 30 years to about 78,000 students today.

In fact, of the 15 industry sectors that the California Department of Ed recognizes, agriculture and health are the two that have grown in the last several years while all others have shown a decline. The Agriculture Incentive Grant provides approximately \$4 million to improve the quality of ag programs around the state with requirements for matching funds from other sources,

and none of these funds can be used for salaries or indirect costs. I would say that most school districts, they can match these funds with any dollars, so a lot of them use the Federal Perkins dollars, and I will say that there is a Maintenance of Effort Requirement on the Federal Perkins dollars, and we at the Department of Ed use these ag-incentive dollars as part of our Maintenance of Effort with the Federal Perkins dollars as well.

The proposal to eliminate the Agriculture Incentive Grant threatens a proven delivery model that provides essential agriculture education and leadership training experience for students interested in agriculture, California's single most important industry and vitally important to our state's economy. The Ag Incentive Grant is not a categorical entitlement. It is, in fact, a true incentive program designed to assist local schools which choose to participate in providing high-quality agricultural education for their students. While Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson supports the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, the unique and exemplary accomplishments of the Agriculture Incentive Grant Program warrants its being continued outside of the Local Control Funding Formula. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Our second speaker, please, Kimberly Leahy, California Department of Finance.

**MS. KIMBERLY LEAHY:** Good morning, Madam Chair and members. Kimberly Leahy with the Department of Finance, and I'm pleased to present the

Governor's 2014-15 budget proposal related to the Agricultural Career Technical Education Incentive Grant Program. The 2013-14 fiscal year is the first-year implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula for K-12 schools. The Local Control Funding Formula replaced revenue limits and most categorical programs and established a new formula that distributes funding on the basis of student need and any matter that provides greater flexibility to local districts.

During last year's budget deliberations, the funding for the Agricultural Career Technical Educational Incentive Grant Program and a specialized secondary program was proposed to be included in the Local Control Funding Formula. However, the final budget bill presented to the governor preserved these two programs as categoricals. As a result, the governor issued a signing message directing Department of Finance staff to examine whether these two programs should continue to exist as categoricals. As a result of the Department of Finance staff review, the governor's budget transfers the funding for these two categorical programs to the Local Control Funding Formula. The districts that currently receive these funds will continue to receive these funds but without the programmatic constraints or associated administrative requirements. Consistent with the principles of the Local Control Funding Formula, we believe this will provide local educational agencies greater flexibility to offer these programs in ways that meet the needs of their students.

The current Agricultural Career Tech Ed Program provides \$4.1 million annually to districts through an application process administered by the state

Department of Education. The funds are for any non-salary, program-related expenditure, such as instructional equipment, supplies, field trip costs, and leadership activities. These are all costs that can be covered with funds from the Local Control Funding Formula. Moreover, a district operating an Agricultural Career Tech Ed Program is already dedicating significant general purpose funding for teachers, which typically represents the bulk of this program's costs.

Historically, categorical programs have focused on the inputs. Districts were required to report on expenditures and enrollment but not on the outcomes, such as completion rates. Under the Local Control Funding Formula, districts must demonstrate in their Local Control Accountability Plan how they are serving the needs of their students. The Local Control Accountability Plan emphasizes the importance of programs such as Agricultural Career Tech Ed by identifying Career Technical Education as one of eight accountability priorities. It requires local districts to address career technical education by reporting on outcomes, such as the percentage of students who have successfully completed career technical educational courses or career technical education programs of study.

In communities where the Agricultural Career Tech Ed Program is important, districts can continue to fund it under the Local Control Funding Formula. Moreover, we believe that including the funding for this program in the Local Control Funding Formula will give districts greater flexibility to offer, augment, and customize their program to meet the needs of their students.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Next, we have Natasha Collins from the Legislative Analyst's Office. Welcome.

**MS. NATASHA COLLINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, members. I'm Natasha Collins, LAO. The sergeant is distributing a handout that goes over the background of K-12 funding and accountability in California, as well as providing some information on the Agricultural Education Grants we've been speaking of this morning and the LAO assessment and recommendation with regard to the governor's proposal.

Page 1 provides a background on how K-12 schools are funded in California. Historically, schools have been funded in two ways: first, through general purpose monies, which are unrestricted and can be used towards any educational purpose and, second, through categorical funding that funds dozens of categorical programs. These are restricted funds that have reporting requirements and spending requirements associated with them. To give you kind of a sense of what the budget for education is in California, in 2013-14, K-12 schools received approximately \$50 billion. Over time, the state adopted many categorical programs. But over time as well, researchers and practitioners concluded that the categorical system had major shortcomings.

First of all, there were many complicated formulas that districts and schools needed to adhere to in order to receive their funds. Also, there is high administrative cost associated with these reporting requirements. Moreover,

the critique concluded that this system was more compliance focused rather than student focused, and it made it very difficult for districts and schools to target their funds towards student needs.

As a result of these shortcomings, last year the legislature restructured the categorical system by implementing a new streamline funding formula known as the Local Control Funding Formula or LCFF. The LCFF removes spending restrictions from two-thirds of categorical programs and took this associated funding and folded it into the LCFF to be distributed to districts based on the characteristics of their students. Students in higher grades get a higher funding rate, as do districts with students with high English language learners and low-income students as well as foster youth. The intent of the new formula was to provide a simpler system that would better enable districts to direct their funds to meet student needs.

On page 2, we provide a brief overview of the accountability system in K-12 schools here in California. The state uses the Academic Performance Index, better known as the API, to determine whether schools are meeting student needs and to make schools accountable to student performance. The API historically has been based almost entirely on student assessments, so these are the star tests and the CAHSEE tests we're all familiar with. However, to better reflect student achievement, the legislature enacted legislation that required the superintendent of public instruction to use other indicators to determine student success through the API. One of these indicators is college and career readiness. As the Department of Education indicated earlier, there

are 15 sectors that they have identified as career technical education industry sectors. These include construction, health services, transportation, and agricultural education, amongst others. So these indicators need to be included by the 15-16 school year. These could include college and career readiness indicators and graduation rates, things of that nature.

In addition to the Academic Performance Index, which the state has historically used, as the Department of Finance mentioned, the legislature recently adopted the LCAP, or the Local Control (and) Accountability Plan, in conjunction with the LCFF, or the new formula. The LCAP has eight state priorities, including student achievement and engagement, that districts will be measured to make sure that they're being held accountable to students' success and performance.

Moving to page 3, we have an overview of the Agricultural Education Grants which the Department of Education did a great job of outlining. I'll just make a few notes to reiterate some of the important points. The Agricultural Education Grant is a categorical program. In 13-14, \$1.4 million was awarded to over 200 districts in California. The grant averaged \$18,000. As was mentioned, this grant is restricted to non-salaried items and is primarily used to purchase equipment and support fees associated with conferences and student field trips. These funds cannot be used towards teachers' salaries or instructional costs. Applicants—this is a non-competitive grant—so if applicants operate an approved agricultural program, they are eligible to receive the grants. However, they must meet certain state standards, and they

must provide matching funds unless they acquire a waiver. One of six state evaluators evaluates these programs annually on things like leadership and career opportunities and development.

Moving to page 4, we summarized the governor's proposal for this budget year. As mentioned earlier, most categorical programs lost their spending restrictions in 2013-14 and became part of the new Local Control Funding Formula. Agriculture education grants were retained through this process, and the governor proposes to fold this funding into the LCFF in the coming year. Districts who now receive this funding would continue to receive this funding moving forward. However, the spending restrictions and reporting requirements would be eliminated, and districts which are governed by locally elected boards would make the decision of how to use this money. They could use it exactly as they do now or use it in other ways to target student needs. Though not directly part of the Agricultural Education Grant Proposal, the governor also has proposed to increase funding for high school students this year. High school students will receive at least \$700 more per student to be directed to districts. The districts with their locally elected boards will decide how to use this money. There are no spending restrictions on this money so they could direct it in any way they wish including towards career technical education programs like agriculture.

Page 5 provides the LAO assessment and an overview of the governor's proposal as well as our office's recommendations. We recommended adopting the governor's proposal to fold agricultural education grants into the Local

Control Funding Formula moving forward. Our review has found that this is consistent with the legislature's decision to provide more local control through the Local Control Funding Formula. Currently, districts spend their funds, their unrestricted funds, on equipment and field trips routinely and all other educational areas. In fact, annually districts spend about \$300 million on equipment and materials. We aren't clear on why there is set-aside funding for one career technical education industry sector. Agriculture is one of 15 industry sectors in the state that the California Department of Education has identified. Usually, districts must use their Federal Perkins money or their unrestricted funds to purchase things like equipment and field trips and the fees associated with conferences.

Lastly, the state is providing more money for high schools now, and this money could be directed towards these types of programs. Moving forward, as well as adopting the governor's proposal, we recommend holding schools accountable to CTE student outcomes as the new Academic Performance Index and the Local Control Accountability Plan to do.

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

First, I have a couple of questions for Russ Weikle with the Department of Education.

First of all, when were state funds first available for Ag CTE, and can you discuss in further detail why quality criteria were developed?

**MR. WEIKLE:** Well, the funds first started in 1983 with the Hughes-Hart Education Act. And, actually, that act also established a statewide Agricultural Advisory Committee and that was coming out of the needs of business and industry for stronger ag programs in the state. I think the most important part of the Ag Incentive Grant is the fact that we do have 15 quality indicators, including requirements of properly credentialed teachers, that they run a student organization that's integral to their classroom activities. And, basically, the ag education methodology uses or utilizes three integral components: and that is classroom and laboratory instruction tied in with student supervised agricultural experiences, and leadership, and interpersonal skill development. And while it's true that rolling this money into the Local Control Funding Formula school districts could choose to continue to run agricultural programs, there's no guarantee that they would implement those programs with the fidelity they have that this ag incentive grant brings. They can certainly not follow, if they choose to, this methodology of the three integral components, and we know these programs are successful and have evidence of high student achievement. And to roll that into the Local Control Funding Formula and hope that we see that same level of achievement, we would not agree to.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Okay. Under the LCFF model, how will CTE programs be counted when applying for Perkins funding, and how would your department account for expenditures?

**MR. WEIKLE:** That's actually difficult. We used what we call SACS codes, School Accounting Code System, and within that code system, there's—one code is called the Resource Code and that's where the money comes from. So for Perkins Federal dollars, there's a resource code. For General Fund dollars, there's a resource code. Then, there's also a goal code, and the goal code is where the money is actually expended. So, for instance, in career technical education, we have a goal code of 3,800; the ROPs have a goal code of 6,000. So the department could actually have, from those districts who properly report using the SACS codes—we would know how much money is spent on career technical education, not necessarily how much money is spent per industry sector or in any one specific industry sector. And the other problem with SACS codes is that they're used district—they're self-reported, and it's a local determination on where to charge those expenditures.

So, for instance, if I buy paper for a classroom, whether it be a math classroom or an ag classroom, I could charge that off as a general expense rather than an expenditure for career technical education, and then it would—that expenditure then is not accounted for under career technical education. And the same thing with many, many supplies and especially in programs like our ag biology classroom where they're buying science materials and science equipment, many of those could be charged off as General Fund expenditures. When that happens, then the state is in a position that it's difficult to track our Maintenance of Effort Requirement with Perkins. With categorical programs, we've always known how much we have in categoricals and how much is spent

within those categoricals. Now, we have to rely on our SACS codes to provide us that information.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you. Kimberly Leahy, what is the likelihood that agriculture, CTE, will continue to be funded by the local districts if the \$4.1 million is transferred to the LCFF, in your view?

**MS. LEAHY:** It would be locally determined and that is the core principle of the Local Control Funding Formula, to provide that flexibility for locals to determine how to best meet their students' needs. If these programs meet their students' needs in graduating from high school and moving on to career or post-secondary education, the likelihood that they will continue to provide these programs is very high. Furthermore, in the Local Control Accountability Plan, they're required to address how they're serving their students, and one of those eight priorities is identifying the career technical education that their students are participating in.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Can you explain in further detail how the categorical program funds would affect the target-based grant for schools and how our "hold harmless" fund is considered in the target grant?

**MS. LEAHY:** I will need to defer to Chris Ferguson from the Department of Finance, please.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

**MR. CHRIS FERGUSON:** Chris Ferguson with Finance.

The structure within the LCFF is such that these funds would be built into a school district's base for transition and minimum state aid, their hold harmless amounts, and those are the starting points to transition to the LCFF. So in essence, every district is held harmless to those amounts. Any funding they've received in 13-14, they would continue to receive moving forward. It would have a minor effect in closing those gaps between the LCFF target, which is the aspirational goal of where we'd like to—of where the formula will ultimately fund school districts and where they're starting at.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

For Natasha Collins, can you explain in further detail how the categorical program funds would be counted as hold harmless funding?

**MS. COLLINS:** Districts who would continue to... Would you like to explain it? [Laughing] I'm sorry.

**MR. FERGUSON:** Sure. Again, the hold harmless works because we're keeping those funds with those districts that receive them in 13-14. So on top of all of the Local Control Funding Formula funds that they're receiving in the 2013-14 year, you would add the Agricultural Incentive Grant funding to that amount and that would be their starting base.

So, for example, if it was \$50 billion in 13-14, it would be \$50 billion plus \$4.1 million, being the starting point for that transition to be LCFF targets. Ultimately, over the eight-year projection, we had estimated approximately \$65 billion in total funding would be provided to local school districts through the Local Control Funding Formula.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Wouldn't this make schools reach their targets faster?

**MR. FERGUSON:** Very, very incrementally. Ultimately, the difference between the starting point when we began transition to the LCFF and the school district's base over the eight-year timespan, we projected approximately a \$25 billion gap. So we're looking at closing that gap by \$4.1 billion—or \$4.1 million—which is less than a tenth of a percent.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Thank you, to the first panel. We appreciate you being here and your time and interest.

I would like to welcome Assemblymember Rudy Salas, who has joined us this morning, and invite him to make any comments, particularly given that he has introduced legislation in this subject area. Please.

**ASSEMBLYMEMBER RUDY SALAS, JR.:** Absolutely. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you guys for joining us this morning, as the second panel comes up. [Pause]

Great. How are you, gentlemen?

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Good morning.

**ASSEMBLYMEMBER SALAS:** Good morning. Thank you, guys, and thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me to sit in on this informational hearing. Obviously, we know Ag Incentive Grant does a lot more than just providing technical skills. It provides leadership skills; it provides the foundation and really our future leaders. But, you know, a couple of things I

wanted—based off the first panel, what I had heard was: One, there's a hold harmless funding so that we can move forward with this. Secondly, there is distinctions between the Ag Incentive Grant and, for instance, other categorical programs—right?—for instance, the 15 quality indicators, the advisory panel, with folks out in the community, the business community, their own community. And so to me, those are things that distinguish this program a lot further than anything else. Let's say that you do some funding based on a per-pupil—on how many students are actually there. There's a lot more that goes into this.

I know from my own personal experience, just meeting with a bunch of the different programs and a bunch of the students, that there are—there's an inclusion; there's additional fundraising; there's additional outreach to not only the community but the business community so that we make this program work. And so I think it would behoove us and the administration to recognize that, to see how this is different, and to see how important it is and how important this funding is.

You know, I want to commend the chair, Ms. Galgiani, for not only having this hearing but, you know, she also joined me in signing a letter to you, to the governor, and to both leadership houses about how important this funding is. And just yesterday, she added on—hopefully as a principal co-author—to my Assembly Bill 2033 to restore the funding for this program. And so, I would hope everybody that's listening and watching will join us in that effort by writing in letters, making phone calls. I always tell people we have an

instrument of change; and a lot of times, we have that instrument of change in our pockets, and it's called our phones. If we could just make a couple of phone calls during a break, during a commercial break, I mean, as you're walking down the halls of the Capitol—that we can do that, and we can make our voices heard. So thank you, Chairwoman, for allowing me to sit in and for joining me—well, for joining all of us—in this important struggle.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you and thank you for joining us this morning. I really appreciate it.

Our second panel of stakeholders and community leaders: Jim Aschwanden, Executive Director of the California Agricultural Teachers Association; Alan Peterson, Principal of Atwater High School; Dave Gossman, agriculture educator, Atwater High School; and Julian Parra, FFA student, from Galt High School. Welcome.

Mr. Aschwanden, would you like to begin?

**MR. JIM ASCHWANDEN:** Thank you, Senator. Thank you for your leadership in calling this hearing, giving us an opportunity to share some thoughts with you, and thank Member Salas for taking time out of his busy day to get here as well.

My charge today was to try to give some background information on the formation of the Incentive Grant, what led to its creation, kind of where we are and where we would be going forward. It's interesting because the late '70s in California saw a tremendous growth in technology in all areas, including agriculture. Those of us that were entering the ag education profession in the

mid and late '70s were struck by this kind of dynamic change that was going on in our classrooms and the students that we saw and their interest level. And so the ag education profession and the ag industry really took that moment to look at what we were teaching. And the question was: Are we doing what's needed for the future of California, for the future of our students, for the career opportunities that our students will be facing? And there was a saying at the time that ag education could no longer be about sows, cows, and plows, that it had to undergo a reflection of the technology and all of the innovation that we were seeing in the ag industry.

So the industry partnered with ag education. And in fact, the legislature got intimately involved with the passage of SB 187, which created this Industry Advisory Committee that was charged with going out and answering, What is needed? What do we need to be doing to ensure the future dynamic state of California's agricultural production, the social impacts of the kinds of decisions that we were going to be facing, and the needs of our students? And that group spent over a year traveling throughout California looking at the points of excellence, where ag education is working really well: What are they doing? Where are the common traits? And out of that, over a yearlong effort, came a report, called the "SB 187 Report," to the legislature that said these are areas where we see dramatic improvement when you implement these kinds of activities; and there were 15 areas that specifically were addressed in the "187 Report." Without question, people recognized that there were common threads that identified excellence in ag education programs.

The next trick was—okay, it costs money to implement some of these things. These are not inexpensive programs. My father took ag science in the same building that I took ag science in. When I took shop, I learned on exactly the same equipment that he had used pre-World War II. When I returned to Galt to teach ag mechanics in 1978, I taught on that same equipment that my father had learned on in 1940. It takes money to invest in equipment replacement and to keep up with technology. The legislature understood that, had a very robust debate, because at the time, the price tag for implementing those 15 program standards was \$6 million. Governor Deukmejian, at the time, and legislators kicked around some ideas and said: okay, look, instead of footing the whole bill, what we really need to do is to create an incentive. This isn't about an entitlement. It's not about a categorical. It's about an incentive. So if districts are willing to commit some of their resources, the state will match via an incentive grant the costs of implementing these program standards of excellence.

At the end of the day, the negotiated term was \$3 million was available from the state. The other \$3 million had to be made available through local efforts, and it created a renaissance in ag education. Our enrollment was in the mid-20,000s at the time. Today, as noted, approaching 78,000 students. The impact of those standards will be discussed a little bit by some of our panel members.

I do want to focus on what we have and what's at stake. The Ag Incentive is not a categorical. It is an incentive-based program, much like, the

same—it's exactly the same funding process used for California Partnership Academies, which are not being proposed to be moved into LCAP or at LCFF. It is a program that drives schools to choose among several options what level and kind of ag program they have in their community. The local control is on the front end. This is not a state mandate. You do not have to have an ag program. You do not have to participate in the Ag Incentive Grant. Districts choose at what level they're going to meet these standards and what investment they're going to make which entitles them then to receive this incentive. And so there is perfect local control and it is output oriented. This isn't about inputs. This is about what are you doing: How many students do you have involved in various activities? What level of progress are you making in your curriculum and in your equipment replacement? And all these things are evaluated. It is not simply: well, here's some money; do what you want with it. There has to be a systematic program of improvement that's identified, and the local advisory committee has to meet at least twice a year to validate that progress. It is very output oriented.

Finally, I want to kind of address some information you were just given that really is not accurate. The statement was made that if the Ag Incentive Grant is folded into the base that districts will continue to receive Ag Incentive Grant funding. They will not continue to receive Ag Incentive Grant funding. They will receive hold harmless funding in lieu of the Ag Incentive Grant which is now part of the base. You can't have it both ways. It can't be included in

the base and given to specific schools. That's part of the conundrum with the Ag Incentive Grant. It has never been an entitlement.

I sat on a local school board for eight years. I served two terms on the State Board of Education. I "get" school funding. I understand the need to have some of the categoricals that were really entitlements given more flexibility. And if I were a district superintendent, I would think LCFF, as it's constructed today, is a pretty good tool. That doesn't mean that every program fits it, and there are non-categoricals like ag and partnership academies that don't fit the model.

What does happen over time, this hold harmless disappears when districts get to their target, and districts that currently receive incentive grants do not get their target adjusted. And so the statement that you'll continue to receive funding is accurate, as long as you're talking about the amount of time that it takes you to get from your base to the target. But once you reach target, there's no adjustment made. The incentive grant has literally been lost into the base. And what's doubly tragic in my mind is it makes the standards irrelevant because there's no longer a nexus between performance and funding. Schools are going to get the funding whether they keep a good ag program or they nail the door of the building shut. It won't matter anymore. And schools are kind of closing. There are three drivers, that it's the universal law of education: Schools do what they're required to do; they'll do what they need to do in terms of being measured; or they'll do what they get funding to do. And if you don't

have one of those three safeguards, you disappear. If it's not required, measured, or funded, it doesn't matter.

Now both LAO and Department of Finance threw out the philosophy, the idea, that, of course, some schools will continue to do these things; and it's okay to have a 10,000-foot kind of philosophy—not so good for us on the ground level who have already seen the impact. In terms of general career tech, we all know that ROP's part of the base now; and a lot of career tech funding has been included in the base. In one year, last year, we lost 101,000 students in career tech programs in California. There's 101,000 students that have less access to career tech now than they did a year ago. We also lost 19.6 percent of career tech teachers in California. The report is in the back of the folder that you were given. Those are Department of Education numbers, not our numbers. Those are Department of Education numbers.

Now, I'm going to submit that if there had been 101,000 students denied access to math courses this year or that we would have lost 19.6 percent of our science instructors the roof of this building would have blown off. But somehow, the fact that it occurred in career tech seems to be lost to both the Department of Finance and LAO. They continue to tell the story of the philosophy of how it should work while the philosophy has already hit the brick wall of reality in the real world. If you want to know what the future of ag education is without the Incentive Grant, where schools do what's required, measure of funded, simply look at what's already happening to career technical education in California. That is ag education's future.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much. Those are some amazing statistics I'd never heard before. Thank you.

Second, we have Alan Peterson, Principal, with Atwater High School.

**MR. ALAN PETERSON:** Good morning, Senators. Thank you for having us this morning, giving us this opportunity.

At Atwater High School, we are approximately 71 percent Hispanic, 19 percent white, 5 percent Asian, 3 percent African American; and overall, 81 percent of our students receive a free and reduced lunch, 81 percent.

Demographically, we are challenged. We have gang issues. We are economically challenged. We are social-emotionally challenged, many from broken homes, yet our performance has excelled. Yes, we are a farming community, but our student population is far more urban-like than farm-like. Politicians spend a lot of time talking about the achievement gap, who's to blame, or arguing for or against the educational silver bullet of the month. No Child Left Behind left 20 percent behind. Many aspects of the Common Core are outstanding, but it will not be the silver bullet.

The achievement gap is titled and measured all wrong. It should be called the "involvement gap;" and we should measure student involvement in ag, CTE, athletics, band, and clubs. Show me an involved student, and I will show you a high-achieving one. Engaging students in school by connecting them to a caring adult that instills the value of hard work in competition is what we strive for at Atwater High School. It's what guides me every day. If leaders focused on that, they would find class suspensions will decrease every

year; grades will increase every year, as will test scores; and the need for independent study and alternative ed will go down. From 2009 to 2012, a four-year period, our white students grew on the Academic Performance Index from 780 to 835, or 55 points. Our Hispanic students grew from 684 to 786, or 102 points. Our economically disadvantaged, 684 to 789, 105-point growth. And our students with disabilities, 474 to 612, 138-point growth. We are closing the achievement gap by giving students a reason to believe in their school. Our graduation rate is 97 percent. There is not a school in the state with a higher rate that looks like we do demographically.

The numbers are simply an outcome of an involved student body. We have 87 percent involvement rate amongst our students; and amongst staff, 70 percent. I share this background information because it's important for you to understand how all this ties together. The \$4 million the Ag Incentive Program offers our students statewide is simply the best allocation of educational resources that has ever come out of Sacramento, in my opinion. It is a consistently strong program. The Incentive Program is just that, an incentive—an incentive to provide a quality, structured, measured program. It is serious “bang for your buck.”

The success and growth of our ag program is a major component of our overall success. In the last six years, we have added three teachers and grown to more than 900 students in our ag department. We not only teach outstanding A-G courses and CTE courses, but our students get involved in nationally competitive judging teams, and these sorts of activities keep them off

the street and involved in positive character- and skill-building activities. Our ag students do not come from farming families. Relatively few show animals at the fair.

I want to stress to all of you, most of our students who participate in ag are city kids. They come from apartments, duplexes, mobilehomes, and homes on city lots. We have seven ag teachers, each with their own entrepreneurial small business—horticulture, floriculture, ag mechanics. They are real businesses. They are not a program or an experience. They produce students that leave our high school with real, tangible, relevant skills. We have students that make \$20 an hour the week after they graduate. Why? Because our shop teacher is known as an outstanding welding instructor, and his top students are sought after throughout Merced County.

This sort of success does not happen by accident. Our teachers are held accountable by the state through the Ag Incentive Program, an agreed-upon criteria that guides their instruction as it applies to leadership, career exploration, their curriculum, and personal or professional development. Can you imagine each district providing this sort of methodical oversight to ag in the future? No. That's like allowing individual districts to write their own Common Core assessments. Ag is the backbone of the state. It's the lifeblood of the valley. Are we really willing to allow earmarked ag incentive monies to be on the table and at the mercy of local politicians and unions?

Atwater High School receives approximately \$20,000 in Ag Incentive monies which the district matches so it's really \$40,000. Our program is at the

highest end of the allocation due to the high numbers of students involved. Should those monies be wrapped into LCFF? Our district will continue to support ag at its current levels for now, but for how long? And what will happen in more urban areas? It's not all about the money. It's about the structure and the network of support the programs provide.

Most of my staff are veteran ag teachers. They know what they're doing but the industry standards change. The Incentive Program keeps them up to date on those changes. Beginning teachers need this accountability and structure. The Ag Incentive Program provides staff with a plethora of support that enables them to gain valuable information. The accountability, support, and professional development opportunities are essential in small districts, especially those in more urban areas where ag does not carry the same political clout that it does in the valley.

LCFF is a good idea. Local communities should have a direct voice in the allocation of district funds. Just remember, boards are political bodies, just as those in this room. Everyone has a special interest; everyone has a personal bias. When you look at the state as a whole, there are far more school districts that currently offer strong ag programs in urban areas because of the Ag Incentive Program and the stringent guidelines they must meet. They may be a one-woman or a one-man show; but because these monies exist, they are able to influence and educate many students that otherwise would not know where chocolate milk comes from. That was a joke. [Laughter]

The Ag Incentive Program is not a categorical program. It is a voluntary incentive program. It provides structure, accountability, professional development that is second to none in this state. These funds need to be earmarked so we can guarantee our schools will continue to offer a high-level, relevant ag education. Not every principal has the ag background I have; not every district has a superintendent that understands the value of ag as we do; and not every community has a board member that believes in the personal development ag provides in our district like we have. It's for that reason we ask you to maintain the Ag Incentive Program as is.

Finally, I would like to invite all of you, the governor, and any of your staff to Atwater High School to see what it's like on a day-to-day basis.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much. Thank you.

Now, I would like to invite Dave Gossman, ag educator from Atwater High School. Thank you.

**MR. DAVE GOSSMAN:** Well, good morning and thank you very much for this opportunity. I consider it an honor, and I know my wife's very excited because I get to wear the new suit she bought me for Christmas, so she's very thankful as well. [Laughter]

You know, this isn't about, you know, necessarily \$4.1 million. This isn't about grants. This is about kids. And, more importantly, it's about young adults who, when they enter high school, really only have three years to get prepared for the real world, because in three years after they enter high school as a freshman they have to get ready to apply for colleges or universities or

kind of have some direction. I'm here as an educator. I'm here as someone on the frontlines, and I'm going to speak from the heart; and I'm also just going to speak from the frontlines who are represented. Some of those are behind me here.

The biggest problem with agriculture education is the word "agriculture." I'm going to be completely honest because that word "agriculture" comes with a stereotype. If I say "agriculture" right now, visually in your mind, you're probably visualizing a farmer or a tractor or a crop or a livestock animal. I know it's true. Agriculture is happening right now. Somebody's visualizing that, and it comes with a stereotype, and it's obvious—agriculture education is the pipeline for our future. We rely on ag every day. But it's much, much more than that. It is a proven education model, a proven commodity, that does everything that not just the ag industry but parents and communities and schools and districts and taxpayers want. It encourages kids in a culture where they graduate with self-confidence and direction in life, one where they graduate, one where they go on to a career, one where they can go on to college or a university, and everything else in between all of those angles. It's not just about ag kids; it's about all kids and an opportunity for them to be successful.

I think the best way to share this example is with Atwater High School. I am not an ag background teacher. I grew up in Southern California and on the Coast, but I'm a product of ag education; and I graduated with self-confidence and I graduated with direction and I fulfilled my dream in a career. And it was because of that, that I came back as a teacher.

I brought a picture and I ask you to take a look at it. And it's just of 47 or 48 students, and it's just a small percentage of the over 900 students. In fact, when Senator Galgiani visited us about eight, nine years ago, we were about 300 ag students at Atwater High School; but today we're over 900. We've tripled in size. And of those 900 kids, I can honestly say that 95 percent of those are non-ag background kids. They are the city of Whitten and the city of Atwater. And as our principal shared with you, they represent a lot of the challenges and lifestyles that's throughout the state.

Now, how is it that we got 900 kids to take ag that have no ag background? Well, I'll tell you. If you ask any of those students, even the ones behind me, their answer at their age is going to be the word it's "fun." Why is it fun? Because they're involved. But as an educator, it's one of the best teaching jobs you can have because, like, for example, if you're in geometry you're stuck with a triangle all year. But in ag, you can go to any of the sciences—earth science, biology, chemistry, even physics. If you're into business, you've got sales, you have marketing. If you're into the other science, you have plants, you have floral. You've got fine arts. You've got all these A-G core classes. But more importantly, you've got life-skill classes. You've got the shops, the building, the construction. You've got critical thinking. I mean, this is Common Core before it became common. You've got people that are challenged; you've got people public speaking; you've got leadership. You've got everything that you want; but again, it comes with that stereotype of the word "agriculture." And even though we're in an ag town and even though there's ag

all around us, every time we get a new counselor or a superintendent or a new board member, we have to reeducate that person on ag and open up the doors and show them it's not all about ag. If you take a look at this picture here, there's only two people that have an ag background. They happen to be blond, and they're Dutch, and they have a dairy, so they stand out pretty easily in this photo. But there are students in here—there's an Hispanic young man who graduated who has recently competed in the decathlon and is the highest scored in the county. He was accepted to both Berkeley and Cal Poly in a non-ag major, and yet he was in ag. In fact, he recently spoke at the Rotary a couple of weeks ago, and he said, when I came to school, yes, I had good grades; yes, I had direction; but I was extremely shy. But he was involved in the floral team; and because of that experience, he's one of the most talkative individuals that we know now.

There's a young man, an African American, in here whose goal is to be an airline pilot. In fact, he was interviewed in the news. And they said: What's the value of ag? Why are you in this? And they said, specifically, what do your parents think? And he laughed. And I recognize that laugh because, as parents, if your son or daughter from a non-ag background area is going into ag you immediately get that stereotype. He laughed. He goes, yeah, they don't know what to think. But here's a young man who is at this contest. Here's Team 1, first high individual. And I'm seeing a young freshman develop more confidence, more critical-thinking skills, more life skills. And if he goes on and

becomes an airline pilot, I think that's great. Isn't that what we want, these students to graduate?

It's not necessarily about the money, the \$4.1. I think what's—everybody's focus is on the money. What's the most important is the parameters. You know, why do we have a fence line in the backyard? It's because if you don't, things tend to wander or get lost, and that's what's at stake here. If you just put in a big bucket and let everybody decide what to do, I guarantee you that you're going to lose a product that has proven to be successful, a product that, you know, although these are Atwater kids, every one of their stories and backgrounds and interests can be found at every school throughout this state. I mean, to me, this is a “no brainer.” If you were going to change the \$4.1, if you were going to make a change in the incentive grant, I would have assumed that you would double it or add more money because, as any business, when you're getting a maximum return on any investment you want to keep investing in that.

I think the “proof is in the pudding.” I think the biggest challenge for me as a profession and all of us ag teachers is educating people and breaking down the stereotype of education. But the bottom line is you have a product that makes a positive difference in the lives of young people, and it meets all needs, graduation on to the UC and everything else in between. And it doesn't matter whether they are ag background or it doesn't matter whether they're going into ag. Yes, it's important; and, yes, industry is focusing on that. But most importantly, it's about these kids and our future. And when you look at

the drought and the challenges that they face, and they're going to be the ones that are going to be challenged to come up with solutions, it's important to keep investing in that.

For that, I just thank you for your time and the opportunity.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Next we have Julian Parra who is an FFA student at Galt High School. Thank you.

**MR. JULIAN PARRA:** Good morning and thank you for this opportunity, as well.

Well, let me tell you about my story. My freshman year, it was the most difficult time that I have, like, passed. My parents, unfortunately, went back to Mexico and kind of left me with no support. I now stay with my aunt and my sister, and it's kind of hard because she works and she works nighttime. She doesn't get home until, like, 1:00 in the morning because she's a nurse. In my freshman year, I got into—like, I was very excited. But with my parents leaving, kind of left me with, like, no support. I didn't want to go to school. I was hanging around with people that I didn't think I would hang out with in high school. They were people that weren't the best influence, and I was beginning to think that I wasn't going to make it nowhere in high school. I wasn't going to strive and be the person that I wanted to be, and I wasn't going to be the role model for my sister, and I was going to let my parents down.

My ag teacher would tell me to, like, get more involved. I wouldn't listen, and it kind of like just brought me down. I didn't want to go to school, like I

said. Then freshman year ended. Sophomore year started, and I got placed into another ag class. And my teacher kind of encouraged me, and I listened. And I got this jacket, and it means a lot to me because, like, I think this saved me from being, like, with gangs. And knowing that I don't come from an agricultural background, it means a lot to me because I remember my first leadership conference. The day before, I texted my ag teacher. And I told him that my head was hurting, my stomach was hurting, I was getting sick, and I wasn't going to be able to make it; but that was a lie.

He was, like, "No, you'll be fine. Trust me. You'll have the best time of your life."

Those two days that I went to the conference were literally the best two days of my life. And I don't know—I just think this program has really helped me a lot, and also my grades have improved a lot. In my freshman year, I got cut from the soccer team because I had a 1.3 GPA. And coming into my sophomore year, I got on honor roll for the first time since 7<sup>th</sup> grade with a 3.5 GPA. And now it's my junior year, and I'm more involved. I'm showing an animal at a fair. And I'm excited about it because last year I showed a rabbit, and it was a little tiny thing, and now I'm showing a—now I'm showing a pig; and it's, like, this huge thing. But, I mean, I've got to pull through.

And also, like, my friends are also in this program, and they didn't—they weren't fans of ag. They'd always call it something else. And, like, knowing that they're having fun in this program now, really puts a big smile on my face because, like, I was the only soccer player that was in that program. And now,

the whole varsity and JV team is on the ag program and has really helped them as well. And this year, no one got cut from the soccer team due to the FFA program.

And my sister is a freshman in high school, and also she's in the FFA program. And I just feel like if this money is gone my sister will not have the same support as I have gotten. And knowing that my parents aren't here to support us as well, I know that she'll struggle; and I want the best for her, so I hope the money stays.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

I have some questions now, the first being for Jim Aschwanden with California Ag Teachers' Association.

What alternative funding sources are available to Ag CTE?

**MR. ASCHWANDEN:** Well, that's been a real challenge. Quite frankly, we're supported well by industry. We have a lot of students like Julian that'll show at the fair; and there'll be industry support to pay a lot more than market value for that animal; and that'll go to Julian and help him earn money to go to college and to start that process. And so we have a lot of instances where industry folks have stepped up.

The challenge that ag faces, quite frankly, is in the larger context. Many of our courses are, were, ROP courses. That money's gone. And so we've got cost pressures now because we've lost over \$300 million in ROP funding that has now disappeared. And as I noted earlier, a lot of districts and county offices are simply walking away from that effort. That's going to impact us. I

mean, the Incentive Grant's \$4 million. What percent of ROP used to support ag that no longer will be there?

We also had—unfortunately, California had a lot of financial problems. One of the first things that got cut a few years ago was funding for fairs and shows. Julian is going to pay a lot more in terms of fees to show his livestock at the fair. He not only has to pay an entry fee, we now have to pay a clerk fee to pay the fair to hire somebody to actually process the entries. Our students statewide now have cost pressures to make up for the insurance difference, so many of our students have to actually pay an insurance fee to show at the fair. We've had cuts to the Career Technical Student Organization Fund. In 1979, Senator Leroy Greene authored a bill that created a small fund for career tech student organizations to help, kind of, the statewide program of FFA and FHA-HERO and VICA and all the different student organizations.

The education budget at that time was \$9 billion—well, a little over—well, \$9.8 billion. The state set aside \$500,000 for supporting student organizations in career tech, including FFA. The budget is nearly \$51 billion now, and the support, state support, for career tech student organizations in the budget is zero. That is a \$230,000 impact to the state FFA state operation to help organize these conferences that Julian noted that were put on. So we already have incredible cost pressures that we're facing, budget cuts in other areas. So if the question is, are there other funds out there, we can't even begin to know how we're going to swim upstream the way it is.

Will the industry respond? We hope. Will some districts continue as long as they can to help us? Yes. Is there an alternative pot of money out there? No. And I'd like to keep the discussion focused on reality because the Department of Finance \_\_\_\_\_ all this money that we're going put into education, understand, require fund measure. The measure part, we're implementing Common Core. The legislature and the governor this past year created the largest single categorical pot of money I've ever seen, over a billion dollars, for implementing the Common Core. It's not going to be enough. And as we develop the testing and assessment that goes with Common Core, it will consume more billions of dollars. And at the end of the day, when we fully implement Local Control Funding Formula, it's been estimated that we're going to move from 49<sup>th</sup> in per-pupil spending in this country to 44<sup>th</sup>.

There isn't going to be enough money to do all the things that this principal's going to want to do on his campus. And ultimately, he's going to have decisions to make when that target is reached and there's no more adjustment for ag. If he's going to continue to fund to ag, he's going to have to cut something else. And so when you talk about these alternatives and this extra money, keep it in perspective. It is not this kind of grand and glorious "Nirvana" that suddenly is going to rain down money on California schools. That pressure is not going to go away; and quite frankly, Senator, I don't know how we're going to do this. If we keep the \$4 million, how do I make up for the ROP?

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you. I think we knew the answer, that there aren't other pots of money out there, but I wanted to hear it from you.

**MR. ASCHWANDEN:** Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Second, for Mr. Peterson, how often are you in contact with other schools to discuss ag classes, and is it helpful to discuss classes and programs with other principals and schools?

**MR. PETERSON:** Yeah, absolutely. In our district—I would say not all the other ag programs are as robust as ours. You know, we talk—we have that conversation on a monthly basis with principals in the district. I get calls probably monthly from board members or principals or teachers from other communities that want to come or talk about how we've done, what we've done, so that's kind of how that conversation goes.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

And Mr. Gossman, can you please describe leadership training that you provide to your students so we have a sense of what that is in practical terms?

**MR. GOSSMAN:** That's a big one because leaderships can be defined in so many ways. I think our biggest philosophy at Atwater is... Well, from a teaching perspective, I think the important aspect of the Ag Incentive Grant is that we have a lot of—we've got a huge game plan to implement. It's not like a regular teacher where, you know, you've got, you know, if you have a core class and it's pretty much Monday through Friday. As an ag teacher, because of those standards there, we know getting into the profession that this isn't a

Monday through Friday. It's a Monday through Sunday, 365, especially if you're taking care of facilities at the school. So that's an important aspect of the Ag Incentive Grant because for the future teachers coming in they already know what they're going to be held accountable for. They know where the bar is.

In terms of leadership in the students, I think the biggest aspect to our success is getting students involved. It really doesn't matter what judging teams they're on. It doesn't matter what their projects are, what type of shop project, what kind of livestock. It's about getting them involved and opening up doors where a lot of the opportunities they're taking part in they're leading. You know, leadership can be defined as, you know, influencing others towards a common goal. Well, we lead as teachers to the common goal of getting students involved. But through that student involvement, they're gaining the leadership skills, the communications, the critical thinking, the hands-on applications, general skills, I guess, initiative. I guess the best type of leadership project—product—is that if they're a four-year pathway ag student they're going to graduate with self-confidence. And through that confidence, they're going to lead by example. They're also going to influence their experience on their classmates or other generations behind them. And then they're going to take that confidence and make a positive difference, not in just their future but society's future. To me, that's—you've got a product; you've got an education model.

If it was called the “Bill Gates’ Three Circles,” it would probably would be nationally renowned; but it says “Agriculture Education.” And I think, again, the challenge is, it’s the stereotype. But I’d like to think that, you know, as you gain insight and so forth, you’re seeing that it goes way beyond agriculture.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

And you would like to make another comment?

**MR. ASCHWANDEN:** We do have a lot of very structured kinds of leadership development plans. For example, we have what we call an Integrated Leadership Development Model, and it’s one of the things that’s under great cost pressure because of the cuts to the student organization. We start with freshmen. They’re called “greenhands,” and there’s greenhand conferences throughout California. And it’s about getting kids’ mind around the concept of what is agriculture? It isn’t sows, cows, and plows. It’s ag journalism, ag research, ag marketing. It’s the gamut. And getting them to understand, regardless of whether you see it yourself in this industry, it’s time in your life to start setting goals. So the focus of greenhand conferences is goal setting, getting a vision of who you, kind of, who you are and where you might be headed.

In their sophomore year, they attend something they call the Made for Excellence Conference, and these tend to be more about how do you—what tools do you have in your toolbox? What kind of person are you? What skillset have you developed so far? Start thinking about what your resume would look like. What have you done? What is your sellable skill?

Then their junior year, they would attend an Advanced Leadership Academy where the actual leadership training is much more structured. It's about what kind of leadership there are: the drum-major kind of leaders, and there are leaders that get people to do things that are unbelievable without being an apparent leader. And all those styles of leadership are discussed.

And then kind of the capstone of that was we select a very elite group of kids, come to Sacramento for a week, called the Sacramento Leadership Experience—and several of them were in the building last week. And those kids write bills; they represent every district in the state. And so we have a kid from San Joaquin County representing Rod Wright's district, who has to defend the use of water down in Rod Wright's district and that we better get these canals built and get some water down to Southern California. And it's a real "eye opener" for kids to have to put on the value system and the thought process of folks that maybe aren't the same perspective as they have. And so it's really a capstone course program designed for that real leadership kid that's going to be a leader in the industry or is going to be a state legislator someday, we hope.

And then you throw in all the other things that we do on weekends with kids, our career development events. There is a movement in education right now to badge—they call it badging. If a kid does something and he takes a course and he becomes proficient, it's like you go to the auto repair place and there is a front-end alignment badge and there's a brake badge. Well, we don't give badges to kids. We see how they rank. We have them compete. If a kid is

good at tearing a small engine apart and putting it back together, we don't give them a certificate that says you can do it. We structure a whole career development event series where they travel all over the state competing against kids and other schools that do the same thing. And when you are the high individual in the state of California, that's more than a badge, and it means an incredible amount to the industry.

Again, as Mr. Gossman said, this is about grown kids in a leadership continuum. We don't take freshmen and say, well, these six seem to be my smartest ones, those are the ones that will be the chapter officer someday; I'll work with those. We value every child, whether we think they're going to be the next chairman of the Senate Ag Committee or if they're going to be a kid working on my lawn mower engine when I take it into the repair shop. They're both valued equally. We both want them to exude leadership and understand what leadership is. And so it's formal, in terms of I could give you a list. And Dave's right—it's a philosophy that every kid matters. There's a great t-shirt that says, you know, "In Ag, everybody is somebody." That's it.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Very well said. Thank you. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank Senator Lois Wolk for joining us this morning. Would you like to make any comments?

**SENATOR LOIS WOLK:** No. \_\_\_\_\_ [inaudible].

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Okay. Thank you very much.

And Julian, perhaps you can share with us why it is that you decided to get into the ag program and whether you have decided yet what future career you're hoping to be part of.

**MR. PARRA:** Well, I decided to join the ag program because, well, the opportunities. There's a lot of opportunities, like, for example, public speaking, like what he said, joining judging teams, and I'm on the vegetable judging team, which is kind of fun. Well, it's fun because the field days are fun, visiting all the universities and colleges. And also when I graduate high school, I want to become an ag teacher because, like, I want to pass forward what I have been taught and give others, like, the opportunity to strive as well.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Wow. I know that makes a lot of people here in this room feel like this is a very beneficial program for that purpose. Thank you.

Well, thank you to all of you for your presentations. And I would like to now call up members from the third panel on UCCE Advisor and Farmer Perspective, Morgan Doran. Oh, I'm sorry—the Status of the UC Cooperative Extension Program. And to share with us, we have Barbara Allen-Diaz, Vice President of the UC Division of Ag and Natural Resources.

**MS. BARBARA ALLEN-DIAZ:** It's fine with me if you want my other colleagues up at the same time, if you want to have more of conversation information. It's up to you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** We can go ahead and do that. That would be Panel 4. We have Morgan Doran, County Director and Farm Advisor, from the

UC Cooperative Extension from Solano County; Donald Bransford, President, from Bransford Farms; Dr. Brent Holtz, County Director and Farm Advisor, for the UC Cooperative Extension of San Joaquin County; and Gary Barton with the Barton Ranch. Thank you.

Thank you, and we'll start with Barbara Allen-Diaz, Vice President of the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Thank you.

**MS. BARBARA ALLEN-DIAZ:** Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to be here. I'm going to spend just a couple of minutes and talk about kind of an overview because in your packets you had a lot of material presented; so I'll do a thumbnail sketch—happy to answer any questions—and then I'll let my colleagues give some specific examples.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

**MS. ALLEN-DIAZ:** As you know, the University of California was designated as the land-grant university as part of the Morrill Act back in 1862 because President Lincoln and the folks that worked with him then were incredibly visionary in believing that higher education should be accessible to everyone, from all walks of life, and so the land-grant system was established in California. The University of California and the Berkeley campus became the first land-grant university in this country with a focus on agriculture and the mechanical arts which evolved to be engineering and science and math, okay? So within then the land-grant university system, the Hatch Act, a federal act, established or created ag experiment stations which were attached to the land-grant university. So the ag experiment stations in California then,

as the University of California grew, the ag experiment stations started at Berkeley, at the first campus, and grew to include Davis, so UC Davis and UC Riverside. So those ag experiment stations with a focus on research and agriculture were attached in our ten-campus system to those three campuses.

Then Cooperative Extension was created by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, and we are celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act. I have a handout for you that isn't in your packet about that, that I'd like to give you later.

In addition then, there's a number of programs that you've heard of, of course, that came right along with the creation of Cooperative Extension which is attached to the land-grant university but system-wide with programs, academics, research, and education programs in every county in California. And so out of that then, the Division of Ag and Natural Resources within the University of California has three arms, and those arms are: The Ag Experiment Station located on those three campuses, Cooperative Extension located in all the counties, and the Research and Extension Center system which is nine facilities that allow for folks to do research and hold public programs in education across the state, from the Oregon border all the way down in the desert four miles north of the Mexican border. So there's nine of these research and extension centers that cross about—which we then manage 11,000 acres, and there's some over 300 research projects. Seven of them are agricultural oriented; and two of them are wildland, livestock oriented—sheep and cattle, okay?

So out of that then, it's a partnership from the very beginning funded by federal funds through the Hatch Act and the McIntire-Stennis Act, which is forestry, and the Smith-Lever Act, a cooperative extension. So there is a portion of our funding that comes from those federal acts and have since they were created.

Another portion of our funding comes from the state in partnership. So our state funding flows from here to the office of the president within the UC system and now flows back out to the campuses, as of two years ago, and is tax back.

Our third source of funding is from local counties, so the third part of the partnership is our local county boards of supervisors that provide both monetary and in-kind support for our Cooperative Extension programs. So that partnership has been strong for over 100 years.

So, as you know, we have a variety of programs, many of that you heard of, from 4-H youth development programs, to nutrition education programs, our master gardener programs, our 4-H, and Nutrition Education Program. We have over 30,000 adult volunteers which provide in-kind, through their volunteering, income to the university, to the division, that's valued at about \$30 million, from their work in our programs. We have a number of, reaching a number of students and families within those nutrition education and 4-H programs of about 220,000 kids and their families. So again, the expanse is a systemwide, statewide set of programs. And I haven't even begun to mention our agriculture productivity, pest management, water, water conservation,

irrigation programs—all of those incredibly important programs which I'll let my colleagues give you some specific examples.

The biggest challenge within the division is our aging demographics, which you mentioned earlier. We expect that about 50 percent of our Cooperative Extension academics will retire within the next five years. That has caused us to very, very much devote priority to hiring or rebuilding our Cooperative Extension footprint throughout the state. And to that end, as you can imagine, these aging demographics, we have every single year many people retiring. And over the years, as budget cuts have occurred, we've been unable to hire back the same numbers, not necessarily the same area but the same numbers of people, because budgets have been reduced. So we've done a lot of work in reprioritizing and consolidating and becoming administratively more efficient so that, for the first time last year, we hired more people than left. So we are feeling pretty good that we actually turned the curve, and the rebuilding of the Cooperative Extension academic footprint has a huge opportunity to come into being.

So last year, we hired about 44 Cooperative Extension academics. We're on target to hire 70, total of 70, by the end of this year, and our plan is to continue that rebuilding. Now, we've done a little bit different model—which I just want to touch on before I turn it over to my colleagues—which is, we really have tried to engage folks, like sitting on either side of me, in the prioritization of what is important to our local communities—farmers, ranchers, school boards—what's important to those local communities in the university

providing science and service and education in the local communities, because often for UC our Cooperative Extension academics and programs are the local face of the University of California. And so in our process for identifying priority positions, we've really engaged our local clientele in that process where they, at two ends, not only get to help provide input on what positions should look like but then once we release a position to be hired—say, it's in pomology, let's say it's in rice—then we have folks like Don, ask them to take more of their time and actually serve on search committees along with our UC academics to hire the best possible people back into Cooperative Extension. So that's been a process that were two..., this will be the third year, that we're doing our searches in that manner, in order to be really relevant to the folks that we're serving. And yet, as you know, the University of California, our belief in the highest-quality science that we do and then being able to translate that in some transformational way so it's actually practical and applied, is critically important to us.

So I'd like to stop there and let my colleagues—if that's okay—and I'm happy to answer additional questions.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very, very much.

Next we have Morgan Doran, County Director and Farm Advisor, the UC Cooperative Extension from Solano County. Welcome.

**MR. MORGAN DORAN:** Well, thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here, and I really appreciate you taking the time to listen to us today. So, yes, I am a livestock and natural resources advisor; I have been since 2001.

And couple of years ago, I became the county director for the Solano County office.

So I wanted to talk a bit about an advisor, from an advisor perspective. You know—and I'll mention about some of the public perspective as well. So the UC system, it's really big, and it can be really mysterious for a lot of our public. And I see Cooperative Extension as a bridge into that system, and it's not a one-way bridge. The land-grant system needs to develop information and deliver that to the public. That's what Cooperative Extension does. But it's a two-way bridge in that, yes, information is going from the university out to the public; but it's also taking information and ideas from the public to the university. So it's essentially an access point for the public to the university—the university system, the university resources.

So advisors, as Barbara said, they are county based. Advisors are researchers. We conduct research, locally based research projects. We're educators holding workshops, addressing phone calls that come in, doing farm calls. We're program managers, so many of us manage our own programs that we have, whether it's agriculture, nutrition, youth development, and we serve through those programs as that face of the UC and that access point for the greater public to the UC resources. But generally, advisors have either a county base or a county appointment or, what's more common these days, is a multi-county, multi-county assignment. And typically, we have a pretty focused disciplinary focus of our programs, and those programs are built basically on work that we have done prior, the interest or research. But once

we get established in our program, in our job, it builds more off of the relationships that we maintain in the communities so that the contacts that we have with our clientele really drives a lot of what we do and how we do it. It's also driven by our academic peers. Remember that two-way bridge. We're taking information from the university out to the public; that drives some of the research but also the other way is our clientele telling us what they need. And telling us what they need, we take that to the university so that we can develop a team of researchers to address particular issues. They could be local; they could be regional; they could be statewide; they could be nationwide. And so one example of how this team works is something that I've been involved with. It's a Ranch Water Quality Program.

Back in the 1990s, mid-90s, there was a Cooperative Extension specialist who foresaw the need for there to be a Ranch Water Quality Program, research on ranch water quality. Some people thought, well, might be going out on a limb, but a program was developed. A research program was developed around that with colleagues on campus and colleagues out in the counties. A few years later, a few years down the road, the regulatory process, the state regulatory process, created a regulation that really drove our clientele to need those resources; and we were ready. We had our resources deployed. We were still generating information through this team effort, but we were basically essentially ready to provide information to our clientele and deliver a research-based education program so that they can comply with the regulatory programs that were implemented on them. So that's one example. We have

many other examples across our system with how this network operates. And it's worked well for 100 years, as Barbara mentioned; and that's an incredible, incredible feat.

We've had challenges and Barbara mentioned the main one being the retirements that has come and is still coming. We have fewer advisors trying to do the same job that we did 20, 30 years ago. Are we evolving? We certainly are. Back when Cooperative Extension was much younger, we had advisors covering a single county and perhaps a single discipline. Nowadays, we have advisors covering multiple disciplines and multiple counties. I, myself, I cover four counties—Napa, Yolo, Solano, and Sacramento counties. So there are fewer of us trying to do the same job. And just an example in the area that I cover, those four counties, since I started in 2001, we have lost 40 percent of our advisor positions, and we're about to lose two more by June. So we'll be down to, I believe, about ten advisors in that four-county area. We are rebuilding, but we have to, we have to operate differently. The new technology is enabling us to operate differently. Also, we're restructuring our county offices to more of a regional model, so we're partnering with the counties to work with us in developing a regional framework for us to operate with those county resources and hopefully operate—the intent is to operate more efficiently so we can put those savings into programs.

But the risk, there's a big risk that comes with this. As I said before, the core of our programs comes from our contact, our face time with our clientele, so that we can understand their needs and they can engage with us on the

research projects. And if we spread ourselves too thin, then we risk sacrificing that relevance. So it's a fine line that we need to manage with regard to the number of people and the way that we operate more efficiently with the fewer people.

So going forward, there are many issues in California. You're quite aware of them. And our Ag and Natural Resources' Strategic Vision for 2025 does a great job of describing how we intend to address those issues. But essentially what we need to do is maintain our productivity with regards to natural resources and ag, in agriculture. We do have people covering lots of those issues, all of those issues, from water quantity, quality, soil quality, air quality, food safety, exotic pests and diseases, and nutrition, and youth development. So we essentially are, as a system, a farm-to-fork system. We even go beyond the farm. We're covering the resources that feed the farms, and we're also a rural-to-urban organization. Our programs are covering, our programs are very much in urban areas—more traditionally in rural—but we are well-established in urban. We have the youth development programs and a lot of opportunities. There are many opportunities, not just for new advisors, I hope; and some of the people that are behind us might see some opportunities in the future and their future for working in the Cooperative Extension. There are a lot of opportunities to address these issues that are coming before us in California. The key for us is maintaining a critical mass so that we can maintain the relevance of our programs to our clientele, our citizens of California.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

And our third presenter, Donald Bransford, President, from Bransford Farms.

**MR. DONALD BRANSFORD:** Thank you, Madam Chairman and Senator Wolk, for the opportunity to testify or make comments today.

Before I start—I've been on the school board since 1981 in Colusa County, and I just want to emphasize what the last group said. This is about kids, maintaining these educational programs in the high school. This is about kids. This is about student involvement and their ability to have success. It's a proven educational model, and it's an incentive program that we have to preserve. It's just so important, and I hope we're able to preserve it.

Again, I'm Don Bransford. I grow rice, almonds, and prunes in Colusa County. I'm also chairman of the UC President's Advisory Commission on Ag and Natural Resources, and I'd like to just make some general comments about the importance of Cooperative Extension to California agriculture and then more specific comments about my relationship as a rice farmer with the Cooperative Extension. I think you will see that Cooperative Extension has impacts that go well beyond the fence around my farm.

If California were a country, it would be the tenth largest economy in the world. Excuse me, if California agriculture were a country, it will be the tenth largest economy in the world. In order to continue our lead, it is imperative for the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources [ANR] to continue to play a major role in the ongoing challenge of keeping California

agriculture at the forefront in food production and resource management. Much of our success has been the result of the direct linkage between ANR and agriculture.

Today, the Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension are best described as a vast network of researchers and educators that work together to develop and provide science-based information and applications to families, farmers, ranchers, and decision makers. ANR harnesses the power of much of UC's research; and applies it to the critical issues facing California and the world. And I can't overly emphasize that. They're the linkage that provides the application of science on the farm.

Responsibility for this vast network is vested in the Division of Natural Resources. ANR is a critical partner with California farmers and ranchers, providing growers with scientifically tested production techniques and improvements in food safety and addressing environmental concerns. Cooperative Extension specialists and advisors, in addition to the Ag Experiment Station faculty, are on the cutting edge of research that is used to address issues as they emerge. Because of ANR's structure, it has been able to apply a systemwide approach to deliver programs to stakeholders in an expeditious manner to help resolve these serious public policy challenges. The resources and expertise that ANR and UC are able to provide are unmatched anywhere in the United States or the world.

Now, I'd just like to turn to the rice farming business and the relationship, and hopefully it'll give you an idea of some of the on-farm issues

and then off farm that they work directly with us. Currently, we have three Cooperative Extension specialists in the rice industry, and we're lucky in that our industry is concentrated north of here which makes it much easier than, say, dairy, which is spread around the state. And although we have three, during the cropping season, they're basically in the field every day because some grower has some problem, be it a new weed or they think it's a new weed; they can't get a stand established; the rice is dying, you know; or they're not clear on when to eradicate weeds.

While they're meeting the telephone calls from the growers, they're also setting up their research experiments for the growing season, either individually or in conjunction with the Experiment Station and/or the university. And so they are full time during the cropping season. And once that ends, then they're writing up the research projects; they're putting on seminars; they're writing newsletters; and so they are constantly on the go. As I was sitting, listening to the FFA teacher from the high school in Atwater, I thought, you know, some of the Cooperative Extension agents are kind of like those teachers. I mean, even though, you know, we're out there farming and we think we know a lot, we need that guidance coming from those Cooperative Extension specialists.

I want to talk now a little bit about water quality, which is a big issue in this state. And rice water quality has been a focus of the California rice industry for over 35 years, and Cooperative Extension has been instrumental in improving water quality associated with rice production. During the 1980s,

rapid adoption of semi-dwarf rice varieties increased yields by 50 percent, boosting California's rice yield to the highest level in the world.

One of the reasons we developed these shorter varieties was because of the burning that we were doing, and we thought there would be less biomass if we did that. There would be less biomass, but one of the problems we didn't anticipate is, with the shorter varieties, the tall weeds were very competitive. And as a result of that, there was some introduction of new herbicides, and they ended up into the Sacramento River and impacted the taste to the drinking water here in Sacramento. And consequently, UC Cooperative Extension immediately responded by investigating methods to reduce pesticide runoff and wrote a leaflet to educate farmers on innovative management techniques that could minimize downstream pollution from pesticides and herbicides; and, actually, that leaflet was a mandatory requirement with the State Water Resources Control Board in our agreement with them on the use of these chemical herbicides. The leaflet was distributed throughout the industry and became a required reading for pesticide use permits. Cooperative Extension also worked with the California rice industry to develop and promote systems for recovering excess water from rice fields, further reducing pollution.

As a direct result of these efforts, pesticide residues from rice fields were reduced by over 98 percent from the 1981 levels. So at the time, we were the model in ag in terms of pesticide reduction. More recently, work by Cooperative Extension included an extensive water quality research project that contributes data addressing water quality constituents of concern and

surface water relating to rice farming. The data was instrumental to the rice industry in meeting the requirements of the rice-specific conditional waiver of waste discharge requirements for irrigated lands in the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

I'll just move on to breeding and the breeding program. In collaboration with the Rice Breeding Program at the Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension evaluates the performance of approximately 100 potential new rice Experiment Station rice varieties for California with a series of varietal trials in commercial production fields. The trials determine suitability of the varieties under climatic conditions and their yield potential. Varieties from this public program are grown on over 90 percent of California's half-million acres. Collectively, they have helped push average yields to 20 percent above national average and captured a worldwide reputation for the highest quality.

Also, I'll just touch on air quality, which is a big issue. As you know, we used to burn every acre of rice and that has since changed. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Cooperative Extension worked to help rice farmers adjust to increasing restrictions on the burning of rice straw left in the field after grain was harvested. In the early 1990s, the California Legislature mandated the severe phase down of rice straw burning by the year 2005. In response, Cooperative Extension initiated and led an interdisciplinary team to develop effective solutions to the rice straw issue for the California rice industry as well as preserve habitat for migrating water fowl and increase biodiversity.

Cooperative Extension conducted extensive research to investigate economically feasible alternatives to straw burning which resulted in effective practices that were widely adopted by the industry. It demonstrated that winter flooding of fields can effectively decompose rice straw and provide crucial habitat to overwintering waterfowl. This resulted in improved air quality, and the winter flooding of rice fields has provided critical habitat to biodiversity, something you're hearing about more and more in a drought year. You know, you're starting to see conservation groups concerned about how much rice will be taken out of production. It is estimated that winter-flooded rice fields provide 60 percent of the food resources available to wintering migratory waterfowl in the Central Valley. It is estimated that replacing the waterfowl food resources currently provided by flooded rice fields in the Central Valley would require an investment of more than \$1.5 billion in new wetland restoration and management.

So, you know, most of these successes are a direct result of our engagement with Cooperative Extension. And as I said previously, the Cooperative Extension agents and specialists that work in our industry are very, very busy; and a number of years ago, the industry was having trouble with new weed populations, and so we actually endowed a chair within the University of California at Davis to deal with weeds. And more recently, we have endowed a second chair that is more of a nitrogen specialist that is in ANR, and that's about a \$1.3 million investment. Now is that... And other commodities are also looking at or have endowed chairs. But I just want to

say, you know, there are a lot—there are over 400—crops grown in the state, and Cooperative Extension tries to meet the needs of all of those commodities, and so there are just not enough people. Secondly, many of the commodity groups are not organized like rice, and so it becomes more difficult for them to make that investment.

So with that, I would just say that the recession has caused dramatic cuts in everything, and we sure hope, from a grower perspective, agriculture perspective, that we see Cooperative Extension grow back to its former self. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Senator Wolk, would you like to ask any questions or make any comments?

**SENATOR WOLK:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was telling the chair that I have to leave—I have an 11:30 appointment—but I wanted to make some comments about something I hold near and dear to my heart, and that is the Co-op Extension and all that it's done, having served on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors and representing Yolo and Solano and now Napa and Sonoma. I mean, it's really a wonderful, wonderful program. But I wanted to congratulate you in particular, Barbara, for, you know, taking on in 2008 ANR, you know, reorganized itself essentially and set up different priorities which truly do reflect the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and a unique approach. So on invasives, on sustainable food systems, natural systems, all of that, and healthy communities, all of that is areas that you've been branching out on and

this sort of makes it clear—and water, of course—so I really congratulate you for that.

And I wanted to say to Don, I've known you, of you, and you a long time. I had no idea you were on the school board in addition to everything else you do.

**MR. BRANSFORD:** Secret, secret. [Laughter]

**SENATOR WOLK:** Secret. But I think the rice issue—and I'm glad you brought it up—is a real example of how all these partners work together—the university, the industry, Co-op Extension, research—and solved a difficult problem. Balance had to be found between the importance of the industry and people's health, and it's just a wonderful success story I'm glad that you highlighted. There are many others as well, but that's one that I've been aware of for many, many years and grown up with in public office. So thank you for that and certainly everything that you do in Solano County.

So thank you, Madam Chair, for letting me butt in.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

I, too, remember the rice problem. I was working for Senator Pat Johnston at the time when that was the big topic of discussion. I remember it well. Thank you.

**MR. BRANSFORD:** It's a good thing.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Next, we have Dr. Brent Holtz, County Director and Farm Advisor from the UC Cooperative Extension from San Joaquin County.

**DR. BRENT HOLTZ:** Senators, thank you very much for inviting me here. I'd like to echo a lot of the thoughts my colleagues have already mentioned. We've been around 100 years, and we're still celebrating that this year. I was asked to talk a little bit of the overview of Cooperative Extension in San Joaquin County. And we do have five farm advisors in San Joaquin County that work on crop-related issues, and most of our advisors work with helping growers improve their production ag practices. But many of their practices are designed to, in later days, have been to meet environmental regulation or to mitigate their use of nitrogen efficiently and so more and more where our research has taken on an environmental bend.

I do want to mention that I think early on when Cooperative Extension was formed, we were basically a conduit from the university land-grant institution, as already mentioned, to the farmers. But I think there's been a transition in recent years where there's a need to do local research in local counties, and a lot of the farm advisors—we all have to have master's degrees—but I think the latest study, I think 85 percent of the new farm advisors hired now have Ph.D.s which reflects, I think, an interest in advisors actually conducting research at a county level. I think that's important to mention. There's research being done by Cooperative Extension on a local-need basis. We also have an environmental hort[iculture] advisor which serves the urban population and landscape and management—and I'll talk about that in a minute. We have a nutrition family consumer science advisor, who also has six nutrition educators on her staff; and I think they participated in the farm-to-

fork event that you helped sponsor in San Joaquin County last year. So we thank you for that.

I think, as Barbara has mentioned, we, during the course of the budget cuts through the previous years, we've lost a number of advisors. I believe when I started as a farm advisor—it's hard to believe 20 years now—we had over 300 farm advisors; and I think we're around 150—I'm not sure. We're up to 200 now because we've been hiring back. I've got a      grant. [Laughter]

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Since which year? I'm sorry.

**DR. HOLTZ:** I started in 1994. And so during a lot of my career, we've seen a lot of advisors retire; and they're not always replaced in the same role they had before; and we've seen these multi-county partnerships form. So in San Joaquin County, to be specific, we lost a 4-H advisor about seven years ago that we haven't been able to replace yet, but it's currently being recruited. Now, though, it's being recruited as a joint position with Stanislaus County. But the reason that our 4-H program was able to stay together during these seven years is we've had 300 adult volunteers that really come together and support that program and have kept it going. We had a small-farms advisor that we lost in San Joaquin County that also did entomology; and we haven't had that replaced; so we have a need in entomology in San Joaquin County. We lost our environmental horticulture advisor about seven years ago. And in this case, San Joaquin County came to the table for us with diverting funds from public land waste—AB 399, I think is what it is—and San Joaquin County provides the University of California \$200,000 a year to fund an environmental

hort[iculture] UC advisor and a program rep in the Master Gardener Program. And because of that funding, we've had a master gardener coordinator; and we're up to 150 master gardener volunteers, which are having a big impact in our county. So we've been able in some cases to obtain funding from the county. We've also lost a dairy advisor and a range and natural resource advisor; and those positions were hired back as cross-county positions; and they're in Stanislaus County now. But as far as impact in a certain office, if you lose a person and they're not there anymore, it feels like a loss even though programmatically we're covering that, that area. So I think there has been a loss. We've seen our numbers dwindle, and there's not a person to our right or left anymore.

Previously, before I came to San Joaquin County, I was a pomology farm advisor in Madera County. During that time period, the advisor to the south of me retired and the advisor to the north of me retired, and I was impacted by trying to maintain an extension program to almond farm advisors. And by the way, when I'm not being a county director, I'm trying to be the almond farm advisor for San Joaquin County.

One of the things that has changed, I think, as farm advisors have taken on more roles, is how they distribute their information to their clientele. Fortunately, technology has helped us. Many of us have newsletters now we're sending out electronically, which helps the cost, or we have web pages; or I participate in the Almond Doctor blog that David Doll, one of our younger farm advisors, started in Merced County. And so I think that technology has helped

us reach a lot more growers than we're used to. I write an article for "Pacific Nut Producer" magazine that goes out to 10,000 nut growers every month or ten times a year, so we're taking advantage of technology to reach more people than we ever did before. And a lot of us get international emails and as a result of technology too.

The drawback, I think, of all this technology and spreading us out is that, I think, we do lose a little bit of the one-on-one contacts that made the Cooperative Extension so strong in the first place with our clientele out in the field. And we can't have everything; but I think that that was one of our big strengths, is getting farm advisors like us out visiting with our grower cooperators so we can see their need in the field; and we can adjust our research programs to meet their need. And that's still very important for what we're doing.

You also asked me to talk about alternative sources of expertise that the growers and our clientele may find if they're not relying on us. And that, I think we've seen a large increase in pest control advisors and crop advisors in the agricultural fields. And in some cases, that's good for us. We've made them our clientele. The only problem with some of these relationships is many of these crop advisors are associated with fertilizer companies or companies that are selling products. And so, often they'll give you advice, but they want to sell something along with that. So I think one of the real values of Cooperative Extension that we are still out there is our unbiased advice that we give growers in the field on how to grow their crops and as best as they can.

I think that was all of my points.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

And our final presenter is Gary Barton from Barton Ranch. Thank you.

**MR. GARY BARTON:** Thank you, Senator Galgiani. Appreciate the opportunity to be here today, and I'll discuss what we hope is the ongoing efforts of Cooperative Extension for California agriculture.

As you mentioned, my name is Gary Barton. I'm part of a family that has been farming in California since 1912. We are now in our fifth generation. And all of those generations have been involved with direct contact with Cooperative Extension advisors. We—our—family business has benefitted greatly from the advice and the in-field cooperation that we've experienced with our farm advisors. It's been mentioned a number of times, but several of those people, particularly in our part of the farming world—we grow primarily walnuts and now olives for olive oil—but several of those advisors have retired; and a number of others who are very active in our part of California agriculture are approaching that retirement age. And we desperately need that infusion of new blood and new minds to assist those of us in California agriculture to continue to do the things that we do.

Our advisors have been active in helping us develop a number of changes in the way that we farm. One of those is the ability to—we hope—someday, no longer use pesticides to combat the primary pest in walnuts, which is called codling moth, and it's a challenging little insect. We are now, on all of our orchards, using what's called mating disruption, which is a pheromone to

confuse the flying moths, and we hope that someday soon that will result in, as I said, no longer using pesticides.

They've also been very active, and we've cooperated extensively in developing new irrigation techniques that have resulted in more efficient use of the water that we use. Efficiency of water use is something that's on a lot of people's minds these days, and we're grateful that through the efforts of our farm advisors that we've been able to reduce that in many of our permanent crops in California.

One thing that I want to really emphasize about the UC advisors is, these are people—these are men and women—who don't work on the clock. In fact, I would challenge anyone in Sacramento to find a group of people that is harder working and more dedicated than our UC advisors. These are folks who've been out at our farm at 5:00 in the morning; they've been out at 11:00 at night; they've been out on Saturdays and Sundays. They don't have a 40-hour workweek or anything close to it. Their dedication is exceptional, and it's because they're passionate about what they do and about the relationships I think that they've developed with those of us in the production farming community. Because of the investment that the state has made in this, California is clearly the leading producer of safe and high-quality food and fiber in the world. We have every expectation that we will continue to be, in part because, of course, we're blessed with an incredible climate, with the wonderful soils of the Central Valley, and, hopefully, with ongoing plentiful supply of water. By the way, thank you for your efforts to add storage to the state of

California. That is a courageous stance and one that California agriculture, we greatly appreciate. And it is again through the dedication of these farm advisors and that cooperation with producers that we hope to continue to be on the cutting edge of food production in the world. The population in the world continues to grow. We're at, I think, 7.2 billion people. I think expectations are we'll get to 9 billion in 50 years. Those people need to eat. California has the opportunity to continue to export a lot of food. There's a geopolitical component to that, there are trade-balance components to that. And we're excited to be part of that. But this is a group of people that is critical to what we do, and we just hope that you and your colleagues continue to recognize the importance of what they do for us.

I'll just conclude my remarks by saying that our family hopes to continue to grow. We have now over 100 employees. In our early days, you know, it was just family members and the chickens and the cows and the vegetable plot and a few trees. We are excited about the future, and we hope that those of you in Sacramento will be excited with us and recognize the hard work that folks do at UC Extension to help us do our work. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

I have a question for Barbara. Given the rate of retirement of advisors in California, how long will it take to rebuild the program to previous levels?

**MS. ALLEN-DIAZ:** A number of years, probably the next between ten and 15 years to rebuild to numbers that we were 25 years ago. On the other hand, I want to emphasize—one other time I talked about this federal, state,

and local partnership—and it couldn't be done at this point in time without the continued support of our commodity groups throughout the state, who not only had supported research for years and years for our farm advisors and nutrition advisors, our Cooperative Extension advisors, and specialists, but they also are really working with us now to help support positions to rebuild the Cooperative Extension footprint. And the model that we put together is the same for any group that's able and willing and interested to participate. And so far, rice was the first commodity group, and pistachios have also supported a position, as have the table grape industry; and we're in conversations with many more. But they all—it's the same model so that there's no.... negotiation, if you will, so that one commodity group gets a better deal with the university than another group, and I think that that's really important to emphasize that these folks are stepping up and helping us and what they're doing is funding positions for six years. And if the person is successful over those six years, we are—the university—is picking up those positions going forward, their salary support, benefits, et cetera. So it's a model that then we're staging, so we are in some ways mortgaging against the future, if you will, because we're having outside funding for six years and then we're picking up that funding, but it's allowing us to rebuild faster.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** I would like to echo your comments, that in my time as chair of the ag committee I have recognized that the commodity groups have always been ready to step up to the table and be part of the solution, to address the problems and concerns that are raised in their particular

industries, and they've been ready to self-assess and propose ways to combat those different needs.

**MS. ALLEN-DIAZ:** Couldn't have been done, you know, and can't be done going forward. It's a tremendous part of the partnership.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Well, at this point in time, I would like to open it up for public comment, and thank you for your presentations—very, very valuable. Thank you.

Thank you. Please proceed.

**MR. ISAAC VALENCIA:** My name is Isaac Valencia, and I'm a graduate of the Galt High School Agriculture Program. I'm currently a student at Chico State, and I'd just like to tell you my story.

My parents immigrated to the United States in 1987 with one goal in mind: They wanted to give their children better opportunities to succeed in life. For a long time, I thought soccer was my way out. I was pretty talented as a kid. And it wasn't until that I got to high school that I found a much more practical avenue—that avenue was the agriculture program. The hands-on approach and different learning model allowed me to flourish as a student. I became motivated and dedicated myself to school because of it. It was because of the efforts of others on my behalf in the program that I received enough money in scholarships as a senior to be able to pay for my first two years of tuition at Chico State. Once I arrived at Chico, the gifts just kept coming because I was actually able to obtain a job that continues to help me pay for college today. However, the reach of the agriculture program goes much

further than just myself. After seeing the success with the program that it had on me, my uncles—who traditionally never value education—for my cousins, allowed them to get involved in their school and agriculture program because of this.

One recent example is my cousin Alex. He recently graduated high school, attended Butte College for the welding program, and is now working as a full-time certified welder. His life is infinitely better because of his study habits, work ethic, and skills he learned in his high school program. Without proper funding to agriculture programs like this, our successes like his or mine may never have been achieved.

I am currently in my fourth year at Chico State, and I'm majoring in agriculture science and education. I can't wait to get back in the classroom, as an agriculture teacher this time, and reach out to those students who would otherwise go unnoticed. I'm a living testament to the effectiveness of these programs and believe with continued funding they can and will continue to produce student success stories like my own. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Next, please state your name and where you're from for the committee.

**MR. ROBERT GORE:** Robert Gore from the Gualco Group. On behalf of the California Wine Grape Growers, we're in strong support of UCCE. The Cooperative Extension is amazing. They lift many times their weight.

Speaking as an individual, and a private individual, I've watched my son blossom at Davis High School at FFA. Our daughter just returned from

Afghanistan where her FFA skills contributed significantly to her survival in combat. My sister is a professor of theater arts at Tennessee. She will only hire FFA alumni as her teaching assistants because of their ethic.

I can answer the chair's question. I coach football at Davis High School, and I'm on a couple of school district committees. The local fundraising environment is very competitive, very crowded. There's theater arts; there's music; there must be 20 sports. And FFA could raise money, but it would be extremely difficult. And they do now supplement their funds.

Lastly, I've been in Sacramento since 1984 and worked for two governors, helped put together the budgets from 2007 to 2010. I can tell you with absolute assurance this money will disappear if it's not allocated as a line item. Thanks.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Do we have others that wish to make a comment? Thank you.

**MS. ANDREA FOX:** Andrea Fox, California Farm Bureau Federation.

We are strongly in support of maintaining this funding for career tech education, ag education. These programs are very important. They're valued by the membership that we represent, who understand that along with a strong academic base that career tech ag education is very, very important for a well-rounded educational experience. And as you've heard here, there are many success stories, and there are more sitting in the audience that you'll hear from. It would be a great disservice to students to discontinue this funding for these programs.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

**MS. FOX:** Thank you so much for having this hearing.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

And next, if you would state your name and where you're from.

**MS. SAMANTHA CORREIA:** My name is Samantha Correia, and I am part of the Lodi FFA chapter.

Senator Galgiani and members of the Senate agricultural committee, it is a pleasure to be here. My name is Samantha Correia, and I am currently a senior at Lodi High School as well as president of our FFA chapter. These past four years, I maintained a very active role with my high school's agriculture program. From serving as the Delta-Cal sectional president to being one of the 47 California delegates chosen to represent our state association at the National FFA Convention, I've truly been enlightened and have found my passion.

The experiences that I have been given, the opportunity to participate in, are a direct product of the thriving California agriculture industry and agriculture education program which flourishes within our state. These agriculture classes do not just provide a hands-on setting for those who have aspirations to pursue a career in production agriculture but are a home to over 47,000 students across the state.

Agriculture education provides hands-on experience, leadership skills, knowledge of the industry, and the ability to public speak with ease. Whether our students enter into an agriculture career or become a doctor, lawyer, or

even a senator, the hardworking and driven skills acquired through the three circles of agriculture education instill rare qualities that will make a positive difference on many people. All this would not be possible if the Ag Incentive Grant is eliminated. Though these monies will be allocated for the general education fund, there is no way to ensure that they will directly benefit the young people in all agriculture programs across our great state. The FFA is without a doubt the most efficient and most effective youth organization in the entire world, building young agriculturists and future leaders, such as myself. If the Ag Incentive Grant is eliminated, over 74,000 children across our state will be losing the opportunities that all of us here have been lucky enough to experience.

My younger sister will not have the same access to classes that my older brother and I have had across the past nine years. She will never get that same education, the same trips to leadership conference, and, most importantly, that feeling of one big family, the FFA family. Every single one of us has a different story, whether this organization saved one of us students from the streets, was a place to make someone feel accepted and welcome, helped a third-generation farmer further his knowledge of the industry, or simply helped a child with their public speaking skills and opened their eyes to the importance of the number one industry in the world. Agriculture education funding is absolutely essential to the success of our society.

Today I ask you, in considering the elimination of the Ag Incentive Grant and AB 2033, please remember all of us here today giving our testimony on the

importance of agriculture education because we are the voice of those 74,000 progressive, intelligent, and passionate agriculturists. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Next.

**MS. YESENIA CONTRERAS:** Hi. My name is Yesenia Contreras, and I'm from the Lodi FFA chapter. I'm here to talk about the Agriculture Education Program, the mass effect it has had on me and schools all throughout California. The FFA is a program that developed premiere leadership, personal growth, and career success. And as a freshman and young member, I've seen firsthand that this is entirely true.

When I first started the agriculture program at my high school, one of the first things I experienced was the FFA creed. When I first heard about the FFA creed contest, I asked my teacher what it was all about. I discovered that apart from reciting the creed I had to answer three questions surrounding agriculture and the FFA creed. I became discouraged because I felt that my lack of production agriculture experience limited me from answering the questions to my full potential. However, my teachers encouraged me and told me that although I had no experience whatsoever I could compete just as well as the other kids who did if I wanted to learn and grow. With this knowledge, I worked as hard as I possibly could. Contest after contest, I've managed to make it through. And now, after months of hard work and determination and with the help of my two advisors, I will be competing at the state FFA creed contest on April 10.

This is just one example of the agriculture programs developing premier leadership, personal growth, and career success; and I am only a freshman. I am excited for my future years as an agriculture student and an FFA member at Lodi High as I have already met so many inspiring students. I've witnessed the impact the agriculture program has had on them, and I've realized how important it is that we have an agriculture education program in our high schools. I am positive there are many students—I'm sorry—there are many agriculture students and FFA members being impacted like I have all throughout this state. This will continue to be possible with the passage of AB 2033, which can maintain funding for the Agriculture Education Incentive Grant. This will ensure that schools with agriculture programs are supported and students like myself with no agriculture background will continue to be inspired to pursue a career in agriculture.

Once we are exposed to the impact and importance it has on our everyday lives, we are hooked and looking for more ways to grow as a leader in our community. Passing AB 2033 will continue to create leaders in all students and should be passed. Thank you for your consideration.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

And next.

**MR. ALEJANDRO RENTERIA:** Thank you for having me here today.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** If you can tell us your name and where you...

**MR. RENTERIA:** Alejandro Renteria. I'm from Galt High School. I'm a senior and this my second year in FFA.

My story from freshman to senior year, it progresses a lot because I came in freshman year thinking I was the big, bad kid; thinking, “Oh, I’m the coolest kid on campus;” but I was really just a freshman. I was getting kicked out of class a lot. My grades weren’t very great. I had three Ds my first semester and that wasn’t looking very great for me. I played soccer, and I barely got—made cuts—so I was barely on the team that year. Sophomore year was about the same thing.

And then junior year, during my soccer season, one of my teachers—or he’s my teacher now—he reached out to me during my soccer season, and he told me to join FFA, and he said to trust him. I don’t know this guy. Why should I trust *him*? But he took me under his wing; and ever since then, straight-A student, no misconduct in class, nothing like that. My grades have raised significantly—I’m sorry—and I couldn’t even consider going to a four year but then I joined FFA and I’ve got to give it to them. They helped me so much.

I am now being scouted for soccer by Cal Poly, Chico, University of Nebraska, Omaha; and I was actually verbally committed to UC Davis. And my grades from junior to senior year is what changed that completely because I was a 2.3, 2.4 student; and within my junior to senior year, I turned into a 3.3, 3.4 student. And that’s my overall GPA.

The skills I developed in agriculture is my speaking and everything—maybe it doesn’t sound like it right now because I’m stuttering a lot—but it’s just a great place to be. I don’t see school as a drag anymore. I always want to

come to school. I always want to see my ag family, and it's just a great place to be in the ag building. The rest of the kids in the school, they're just kids in the school. But when I see my ag family, they automatically put a smile on my face.

Right now, I'm in agricultural economics, and I learned about return on investment. Madam Chair, I can't think of an investment I've seen in my 12 years of school that has returned this remarkable. Just remember, when people come to this country in search of opportunity and can't seem to find it, this is a program that gives the opportunity to everyone. Thank you for your time.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

And our next presenter, your name and where you're from.

**MR. NICHOLAS BERNETT:** Hi. My name is Nicholas Bernett from the Lodi FFA chapter.

Inspiration—something every human being needs to succeed in life. Even though this might be a word someone can say or write down, this word can change lives, perspectives, and even the world. Inspiration can hit you at any point of your life, at your weakest moments or even your strongest. The great thing about inspiration is, it can be anything, from a person close to you all the way to an epiphany in the shower. Inspiration to me means something to look up to, something to help you succeed, and something to provide a source of direction for your life.

My inspiration hit me at the beginning of sophomore year at a new school. Coming to a new school later in the year, I knew it would be hard to find friends because people already found their groups. So I decided to go to freshman orientation. I got put into a group of about six freshmen students and three seniors who are our leaders. Our leaders—I found out later—were all part of the FFA organization and agriculture programs. We started talking and getting along very well; and one of them, the president of Lodi’s chapter, willingly invited me to come hang out with her and her friends. When we hung out, she insisted that I join the agriculture program and I get involved with the FFA. I took her advice, simply thinking, “Why not?”

Shortly joining the agriculture program, I realized that my inspiration hit me. I was welcomed with open arms to the program and organization. I found a place where I could eat lunch, and I found my family. Making a decision to joining the FFA pushed me to achieve greater goals. I quickly joined the impromptu contest, helped with different parades and meetings, and am currently in the vegetable-judging contest. Advancing in FFA contests, in the organization itself has already given me a better chance in college, careers, and life by granting me new qualities and skills. Having the great experience I have already encountered over the years, FFA wants me to get more people involved and join what is now my family.

Inspiration is waiting for everyone in the FFA, and it’s here for anyone who wants to be inspired. So I leave you with this question: What or who inspires you? And imagine that person or thing getting taken away. This is

the case for me and the other 74,000 FFA members throughout the state if you pass this Agriculture Incentive. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

And next, our next presenter, your name and where you're from.

**MS. LUZ HERNANDEZ:** \_\_\_\_\_ [inaudible] I'm a senior in high school. It's my fourth year in FFA. I'm just going to speak from the heart and let you guys know how this program has changed me dramatically.

I grew up in the city of Santa Barbara where I wasn't familiar with agriculture. That wasn't really—because I'm from the city. When I moved out here with my mom, she wasn't very supportive of what I wanted to do with my life. And so, her, like, not giving me that support, I turned to things; and I made very bad choices. I was hanging out with the wrong people. And now that I look at it, now that the FFA chapter has shown me, you know, responsibilities, and they've helped me grow, I look at it and I picture, you know, what would it be if I didn't have this program in my life. Like, would I be dead or in jail? Because I was hanging out with people that I shouldn't have been.

It's a program where I came in my freshman year and, you know, a lot of people are, like, you should do it, like, you should join. And I kept saying, "No, that's not me." I'm Mexican; and it was a stereotype, you know, only people that were in agriculture were blondes and blue-eyed kids; and that wasn't me. And I looked around and sophomore came around and I kind of started getting involved. And at the same time, I didn't—I still didn't like it. And I was still

hanging out with the wrong people. But then junior year came around, and it helped me grow so much. I got involved. And I pictured my life: where would I be right now, like, really, without this program?

I know our generation is getting more used to gangs and violence and drugs, and I think about it. Where would my little niece be now if this organization gets taken away from us? Would she be out doing the same thing that I was? What's going to happen to our generation? Are they going to go run the streets or can we keep this, you know, keep this, like, fund and give them opportunities, the same opportunities they've given me? I've grown so much. I was doing things I shouldn't have been doing, and my agriculture program is just somewhere where I can come; and still not have that support, even being a senior, from my mom. It's hard because she still doesn't "get it," and I can come and talk to my teachers. I'm comfortable with them, and I can ask them for advice, and they're always there to lend me a hand.

My current floriculture teacher, she has shown me so much. She's like a mom to me, and she's pushed me. And all of them, all the teachers, have pushed me to strive for what I want; and they've helped me reach my potential and now... At the beginning, I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I simply thought, you know, things are going to be handed to me, but I know now that you have to work very hard to get what you want. When I graduate, I'm hoping to go to school to learn floriculture and either open up my own floral shop or become a teacher. I've been in floral for three years now, and I've improved so much, and it's just a great place. I want you to think about it:

Where would our future generations be without this program, without these opportunities, that you guys are giving us, for helping us fund this? Thank you very much.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you, thank you.

Next.

**MS. GRACIELA BARAJAS:** Hi. I'm Graciela Barajas. I am 16 and currently a junior at Galt High School. I live with a family of five—my mom and dad, brother, sister, and I. I'm the oldest. My brother just turned 15, and my sister turned ten in February.

We are your traditional Mexican family. Both my parents actually came to the United States from Mexico—don't worry—they're legal now. Being the oldest in my family, my parents wanted me to set an example for my younger brother and sister. So, of course, they, along with my aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, neighbors, family friends, they all asked me what I wanted to be when I was older. And every single time, I would say, "Oh, I'll figure it out when I'm older." But it's just occurred to me that I'm older now; and I still don't know the specifics of the career I want to go in; and I don't know exactly what I want to major in. But despite these uncertainties and bumps in the roads, I am still the happiest and closest to figuring it out as I've ever been. That's because this year I had the privilege to be elected as a chapter officer, and, therefore, I was enrolled in my agricultural leadership class. And I promise you that that is the one thing I am most grateful for in my life.

Last year, I was in the ASB regular leadership class, and it was kind of a joke. We planned not-successful dances. We coordinated interesting rallies and mostly just talked about one another. It was kind of a “catty” class. Going to ag leadership, I had very similar expectations; but, thank goodness, our teacher was determined to make us better and greater than what we were.

In this past year alone, I have learned things that make people’s lives worth living. Yes, we plan meetings and conferences and are role models in our school; but we’ve been taught how to be brave and how to be vulnerable, that taking risks that open us up for judgment, and, worst of all, taking risks that open us up for rejection is a part of life; that if we never do, we will never be able to appreciate every moment for what it is. What kind of class teaches that, a class that gives students valuable information in order to succeed in life? It’s unheard of. And I’m not just talking about living an 8-5 workday, making slightly above minimum wage with a family of four in a town where the houses all look exactly the same.

We were put on this Earth for a reason: to live our one wild and precious life. We’re here to make memories that we can tell our grandchildren when we’re older, to avoid American restaurants whenever we can, and try things that we have absolutely no idea what they are but doing it anyways because why not? About falling in love with places, things, people we might never see again because it’s better than not feeling anything at all. About learning a different language and then going to that country by yourself to practice and interact, putting yourself out there because, why not? We’re taught to be bold

and live extraordinary lives. We are on this Earth for a purpose; and this program, this national organization helps us learn that.

If the Ag Incentive Grant gets cut, then fine, okay. Chances are, my town will still fund our FFA program. But what about the 300 other schools in California? When will those kids learn how to be brave? In five years from now, when my sister's in high school, what if we get new school board members who don't see the value in funding ag education anymore? When will she learn that it's okay to take risks? And most of the times, it's not going to work out, and it's not going to be pretty; but in the end, it makes us better. When will she be taught that we were called to be bold?

For teens just like me who don't know where they want to be 12 months from now, this program and its advisors will help us figure it out. It's not just about farming and agriculture and the top ten commodities California produces. Healthy students all across the country learn how to be successful leaders and live extraordinary lives by taking chances. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you. Thank you very much.

And our next presenter.

**MS. JOANN DANERO:** Hi. My name is JoAnn Danero, and I attend Lodi High, and I am currently their chapter sentinel.

The Senate Agriculture Committee and Committee Chair Galgiani, I'm asking you to hear my story on why the FFA and ag ed programs deserve to keep our Ag Incentive Grant.

Growing up, my sister Tara and I always tried doing things together, whether it was playing sports or even trying to figure out which color we wanted to paint our room; but our polar-opposite personalities always seemed to get in the way. Tara's quite the character with her dreadlocks and purple hair; but, hey, you can't pick your family, right? However, there is one thing she does and I couldn't wait to be a part of once I entered high school—FFA. Finally, we found something that strikes both our interests and escaped from a rough patch in our life.

In my freshman year and my sister's senior year, our parents filed for divorce, and it was around the same time our mother was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. Sure, I accept all this and wrap it all around our heads and knowing that there's nothing that we can do. We felt that FFA was like our safe haven. It was a place where we can go. We were blessed enough to find advisors and members to be vulnerable with when we felt the need to be strong for our family, for some family members who couldn't handle the stress and pressures which as we could.

Our advisors, they encouraged us to go to state conferences and join judging teams just to get our mind off of it, just to get our minds off of something that's completely out of our control, knowing that it's not our fault. But my sister and I aren't the only two students in this state that are overcoming many hard challenges. So you all know what it's like to overcome a rough patch in your life, so I'm asking you to not take away our safe haven that will better us emotionally and mentally. Thank you for your consideration.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Next.

**MS. CIERRA McCLURE:** Hi. My name is Cierra McClure, and I'm a senior from the Lodi FFA chapter. I became involved with FFA during my freshman year, and I've been an active member ever since.

My first day of freshman year, I walked on the Lodi High campus not sure where I belonged but hopeful that the school year would be as great as I'd heard. After a few days of school, I was still shy, and I was afraid to stand out too much. A great friend of mine, noticing that I was shy, which is not typically part of my personality, suggested I join an ag class. I decided to take his advice, and honestly it's one of the best decisions I've ever made.

FFA has taught me so many important lessons. But more importantly, it has given me a place to go where I know I belong, and it has allowed me to grow into the young woman I am today. FFA gave me a family I knew I could always turn to for support, through laughter and through tears. I became a very active member, joining various committees and judging teams. I made many new friends and created relationships that will last a lifetime. Besides gaining a second family, FFA has also inspired me in many ways. For example, my ag teacher has been a great inspiration to me and continues to be an inspiration every day. She cares genuinely about every one of her students, and she has taught us so much. It takes a special kind of person to be an ag teacher, and I know that kids across the state are just as inspired by their own ag teachers as I am by mine.

Now, I'm a senior, and I wouldn't trade my experiences in FFA for the world. From going on field trips to being involved in leadership activities, the experiences have allowed me to grow in so many ways. When I graduate, I know I'm going to miss my FFA family, but I know that they'll always be here for me, no matter what.

For many kids, FFA provides a home to go to, a place to feel loved and wanted, even if they may not have that at their own homes. Without FFA, I wouldn't have the independence and confidence I have today, and I certainly wouldn't be right here. This program is important to many people besides myself, and lessons that can be learned through FFA are irreplaceable. The program encourages all its members to be strong leaders who are respectful and responsible. Besides teaching students the importance of agriculture, FFA represents a home to many students. And for that reason alone, the program should be continued.

In order to continue the Ag Education Program, we need the Ag Incentive Grant funding that will allow programs to meet the needs of students interested in ag. The funds are essential to the success of many programs, and the loss of these programs would be devastating to many students. Without the funding required to run these programs, many students will not understand the sense of belonging I have gained through being involved with FFA. Many students love being involved with ag, and the Ag Incentive Grant is needed in order for students to continue to enjoy the benefits of the program. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

Next.

**MR. JOSE MEZA:** Hello. My name is Jose Meza, and I'm here with the Lodi FFA chapter.

My freshman year of high school, I wasn't originally enrolled in any ag programs because in 7<sup>th</sup> grade I thought I was a skater; and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I did sports. So freshman year, I didn't know where I would fit in best. So as time went on, I talked to my friends that were in the ag programs, and they would tell me how much fun the class was. So I figured I would talk to my counselor and switch out of my original science class and enrolled into ag earth. At first, I was excited about the class because a lot of my middle school friends were in the class. So the class became more involved, and it just got more and more fun. During my freshman year, me and some of my good friends decided to do a competition called BIG, or Best Informed Greenhand. What this competition does is—it's a 200-question test, and it's basically about the FFA manual. So as a freshman and a greenhand, it was a good opportunity to learn about the background of FFA and everything that it is and that it helps do.

The first practice was actually fun, and we learned a lot about the history of the FFA. When the first competition came, we were the first tag team in the competition and decided that Lodi would always be in the top six; and for the whole year, we were. We also had the opportunity to go visit many different colleges and college campuses during the competition and that has really helped me decide what college I would like to attend.

While all this was going on, my friends were talking about fair and showing animals. I knew what it was because of 4-H, but I never actually had shown an animal at fair before. So I wanted to show a steer, but I started too late so I showed a lamb my first year.

After that, I decided I wanted more of a challenge. So my sophomore year, I decided to show a steer. And with lambs, if they really didn't want to move, you could just pick them up and move them. But a steer, it's a 1,000-pound animal. If it doesn't want to move, well, it's not going to move. I decided that that was a huge challenge in itself, but I decided I wanted more of a challenge, and I became an officer in my sophomore year. And my whole sophomore year, I became really involved. I was a chapter sentinel, and I was going to be attending the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. I had never done anything like that before, and it was really exciting.

That week I spent in Indiana with the officer team was the most fun I've ever had. Even now in my junior year, I've tried to be the most active member I could be. You see, I wouldn't have been able to experience any of that without the Ag Incentive Grant. The money is extremely important because, not only does it help us get the materials we need, it provides us with the experience that many of us will never forget for the rest of our high school careers. This grant has helped out many, has helped out the programs in many different ways. It provides my favorite class in junior year, floral, with flowers for us, to make all the arrangements. This act allows the FFA to connect with students in a way that regular classes just can't. The Ag Incentive Grant was created for

a reason. And if you take it away, it's not going to change—it's going to change things in the ag program. The money we've always counted on to provide us with the materials we need will not just be gone, but many of the amazing experiences I've had will be gone for the lower classmen and for the other students who haven't yet had the opportunity to experience it themselves. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you very much.

And our next presenter.

**MS. LILY NICKEL:** My name is Lily Nickel, and I am from the Lodi FFA chapter. This is my second year as an agricultural education student and member of the FFA. My ag ed journey started when I was an incoming freshman. I decided to enroll in ag earth science because I wanted a hands-on science experience and because I thought it would be more relevant to the community that I live in.

From my first day of 9<sup>th</sup> grade until now, agricultural education has become so much more than a special science class to me. Since the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I've struggled with depression. I didn't have confidence, purpose, or security. Agricultural education through the FFA has given me these things. That Ag Incentive Grant is just money; alone it can't shape students' lives. However, it can provide opportunities.

Personally, I've been given the opportunity to gain a sense of purpose. The FFA has encouraged me to explore career paths in the agriculture industry and find something I am passionate about. I've been given the opportunity to

build my confidence. My participation in multiple speaking contests and becoming a chapter officer has helped me become confident in myself and my own abilities. I've been given the opportunity to gain security through the friendships I've built within Lodi's ag department. The ag program in my school is often what supports places and events where students can seek a judgment-free environment. The Ag Incentive Grant has the power to provide these opportunities to students like me across the state.

I urge you to consider the importance of this grant to the future of agriculture education, the FFA, and, more importantly, California's agriculture industry. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

And next.

**MS. VERONICA VIRAMONTES:** Hello. My name is Veronica Viramontes, and I am a junior and in the Lodi FFA chapter.

I may just seem like your regular teenager speaking to you today. However, I have had first-hand experience within the agricultural industry. I am a second-generation farmer. My father has not only influenced me but the people involved in the agricultural program at my high school have as well.

In my freshman year, I was a timid and quiet individual, and the agriculture program changed me. Being involved in these agriculture classes and the FFA, I have transformed into a confident individual who has the drive to manifest my goals into reality. High school is a time in a teen's life where we find out who we are. The FFA and agriculture classes have allowed me to find

out who I truly am and find a place where I know I belong, whether it's having lunch in the ag rooms every day or going to a judging contest or a leadership conference. If the state takes away the Ag Incentive Grant, what will the agriculture programs be in my senior year or for generations to come?

I believe that because of the agriculture program at my high school I have acquired the necessary skills that will assist with my future endeavors in pursuing my career in the viticulture industry. Without the Ag Incentive Grant, the youth will lose leadership and growth opportunities provided to them within the agriculture program. We are the future leaders of the agriculture industry in California. The agriculture programs develop those leaders, and it's only right to continue the funding to ensure that we are developing leaders of our rich agriculture industry that will be the reflection of our society's future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

And our next speaker.

**MR. ZACHARY ZIEMER:** Hi—excuse me—I'm Zach Ziemer, and I'm a junior at Galt High School. When I first enrolled at Galt High School, I did not want to be there. I'm from Lodi where a lot of these kids are from, a town, it's like maybe 15 minutes away from Galt. But the lives I lived in Lodi and the lives I lived in Galt could not have been more different.

My freshman, very rebellious mind thought that I not only had—wanted to go to Lodi High but I had the right to be there like my dad and my brother. But no matter how much I fought, you know, my parents, saying I wanted to go

to Lodi High, I was in Galt. The reason I moved to Galt is because I was doing so poorly in school that I was failing every one of my seven classes except for P.E. You know, if I did choose to come to school, I was skipping class. You know, disrespecting my teachers and just ultimately headed down a very, like, dark path.

However, all of that was soon changed because of the Galt High School Agriculture Department. I enrolled in these ag classes mostly because I heard that they were easier than normal classes—which I've come to find is not true at all. But you have to have two FFA activities per quarter; otherwise, you lose 10 percent of your grade. And so in my freshman year, I did these two activities, which could be going to an FFA meeting or community service meeting or whatever. But I definitely felt like something was missing in my freshman year. And my sophomore year rolls around, and I'm not sure if it was because I had met some of the greatest people I will ever meet in my entire life or I was just looking for something else, but I no longer wanted to be in Lodi—stealing, trespassing, or just breaking the law any way I could, just because I could. It took me a long time to realize that it was the loving atmosphere, the accepting atmosphere, the encouragement, and the motivation of the Galt High School Ag Department that would keep me out of jail indefinitely, maybe even save my life.

And so realizing this, I dove right into FFA. I joined the Parliamentary Procedure Team and the Marketing Plan Team, and both those teams showed me that I could do things that I never thought I could do before, like public

speaking, thinking on my feet, and making quick decisions really fast that would be effective—are just a couple of things I’ve learned from those two teams. I learned that in a really short amount of time. FFA has changed my life, and I know it continues to change people’s lives every single day. But I’m afraid—excuse me—without the allocation of funds that the Ag Incentive Grant provides, chapters all across the state will not be able to do for their students what Galt High School has done for me.

I keep finding myself with one question. I run it through my mind every single day, and it is: If ag isn’t able to keep providing opportunities for students, what’s going to happen? What’s going to stop the next guy like me from doing what he’s doing? I see them walk through my high school every single day. Thank you.

**SENATOR GALGIANI:** Thank you.

Do we have any other speakers who would like to present to the committee?

With that being said, I want to thank everyone for their participation today. And this message is specifically for you, the students in FFA, that many times in the legislature programs are adopted by former legislatures who recognize certain needs and certain problems that need to be addressed. And FFA was brought about—the Ag Incentive Program and the UC Cooperative Extension Program were brought about at previous times by previous legislatures who recognized how important both were. And you are here to remind those of us who have come since that time, who weren’t around when

these programs were developed. And while I have recognized in my time in the legislature the importance of these programs, not all of my colleagues in the capitol are as familiar with these programs. And what you have done today is: you have demonstrated why they're important, how they are different from other categorical programs, and why it's so critically important to ensure that funding for both are specific and not simply adopted into a larger pool of programs.

You've done a fine job. I know you've spent a lot of time out of your day to be here today and that you've traveled from your local communities, and I really thank you and commend you for your participation and for speaking out and doing everything that you can to ensure that these programs continue in their present existence. So thank you so much, and I would say job well done. Thank you. [Applause]

With that, our meeting is adjourned.

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