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March 22, 2013

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
c/o **David Stammerjohan via FAX: 209-465-5058**
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 94249-0013

RE: SUPPORT – AB 823

Dear Assemblymember Talamantes Eggman:

LandWatch Monterey County supports AB 823, the California Farmland Protection Act. LandWatch's mission is to promote and inspire sound land use legislation at the city, county, and state level by encouraging greater public participation in the planning process. We support responsible and efficient growth within city-centers to protect the valuable farmland of the Salinas Valley. Currently the Salinas Valley has over 250,000 acres in agriculture production with a value of nearly \$4 billion in 2011.ⁱ AB 823 will have positive impacts in Monterey County and throughout the state. The growth pressures here are immense and mitigating any potential loss of valuable farmland is necessary to ensure the health of the industry and community.

Currently, California lacks clear standards for farmland protection. AB 823 would adopt a minimum statewide mitigation standard under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for development projects resulting in conversions of farmland to non-agricultural uses. If AB 823 is adopted, every acre of farmland developed would require a minimum of one acre of farmland permanently protected. While LandWatch recognizes that 50% of farmland could potentially be lost, this bill is still a step in the right direction. AB 823 would help ensure our long term food security, encourage smart growth in urban areas, and maintain a productive agricultural economy.

Despite its significance to our state, the state of California continues to lose farmland to non-agricultural uses at an alarming rate of 30,000 acres annually. Moreover, new development pressures from infrastructure projects threaten to speed the loss farmland in the state and generate substantial GHG emissions. If passed, AB 823 would provide one tool in the toolbox of solutions to address these pressing public policy problems.

Thank you for your leadership in authoring AB 823, the California Farmland Protection Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy L. White', written in a cursive style.

Amy L. White
Executive Director

ⁱ2011 Monterey County Agriculture Commission Crop Report.
http://ag.co.monterey.ca.us/assets/resources/assets/252/cropreport_2011.pdf. Page 5.