



**Department of Agricultural and
Resource Economics**

Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-1172

(970) 491-6325

Fax: (970) 491-2067

Colorado House Committee Members

I am writing this letter in my role as current member and past chair of the Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council (COFSAC) in support of House Bill 1202 that would advance the mission and effectiveness of our COFSAC in several ways.

Almost ten years ago, I was privileged to be a part of a group who envisioned an organization like COFSAC, recognizing the need for a broad, multi-sector approach to addressing issues and improving our food system. In terms of CSU, our own Extension program developed a Food Systems team ten years ago based on our perceived need to better support the growing number of community groups and industry partners working in this area. We knew we could also benefit from a team of government agency partners engaged in a cross-disciplinary advisory board for the whole set of food system stakeholders. Accordingly, CSU has been active with COFSAC since its inception, and has benefitted from this group's advisement. Although I have had less interaction with the Farm to School Task Force, we have been voluntarily meeting together more, and it seems like an appropriate time to meld these groups given the commonality of their missions.

The one aspect of COFSAC that has continued to present challenges is staffing issues. At first, LiveWell graciously provided staffing, and that worked well, although some may have perceived it led to more attention to issues at the heart of that organization. When LiveWell had to reallocate resources, CSU was asked to step in to both lead and staff the organization. Although we really did not have a dedicated person to do so, we felt so strongly about supporting COFSAC that we have done our best to reallocate some of our position time to provide baseline support (knowing CSU might also seem like an appropriate organization to staff the council as well). As much as we have attempted to rise to the challenge, our already time-consuming academic jobs and less frequent availability to Denver-based partners have meant staffing coverage has been stretched too thin.

I confidently believe that COFSAC could do so much more with a dedicated staff person, with a particular focus on outreach related to the Colorado Blueprint for Food and Agriculture (see <http://foodsystems.colostate.edu/research/colorado-blueprint/> for more details). Given COFSAC's continued need for CSU to facilitate and guide processes such as the Blueprint, we realized that perhaps staff for the council should be placed within the CSU system, but in an administrative professional role (rather the traditional academic role of current staff that have competing interests such as teaching and research that constrain their ability to invest in COFSAC activities and be in Denver meeting with key partners).

As you can tell, my colleagues and I feel strongly that the potential for staffing COFSAC is a high priority investment as we consider ways that our state-level collaborations in the area of food systems could continue and be strengthened.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide more information or ideas of how this bill would invest in the future of food programming in Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn Thilmany McFadden". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dawn Thilmany McFadden, Professor