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Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60602

February 28, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Toni Preckwinkle and the Honorable Cook County Board of Commissioners,

On behalf of the Illinois Soybean Association and our 43,000 farmers in Cook and state-wide, I am writing to express our upmost support for Resolution #23-1426.

Farmers all over the state, including those who care for the 12,000 acres of farmland that fall within Cook County's boundaries, know the importance of agriculture in our food systems, as a major economic driver, and as an asset in virtually every other industry where people are moving, eating, and building throughout Illinois.

Soybean producers know first-hand of the importance their crop brings to the state, producing goods that feed the neighborhood corner-store patrons who need a milk alternative all the way over to Egypt where aquaculture scientists are finding new and sustainable ways to feed their fish. Our partners in agriculture know the weight we carry with every crop we sow, as it's what we plant in the ground that ultimately keeps our population alive, healthy, and well. Some of us have the privilege of meeting our communities needs directly, like our farmers in Cook County. One in six of Cook County farmers sell directly to consumers, feeding folks directly on the ground with proper nutrition and access to fresh fruits and vegetables at places such as farmer markets. We know there are gaps in access to quality and affordable foods. Agriculture and systemic overhaul stand as a direct solution to filling community needs, and IL Soy and our partners in ag look forward to future opportunities to address these needs and fill these gaps.

Illinois' economy is growing in strength by the day, largely due to various agricultural commodities we export to feed and fuel the country and our world. Cook County is ranked second in the state for equine production with a sales volume of over 1.5 million dollars. Good jobs, business opportunities, and international capitol start and end in the field, with soybeans being a major economic driver for the state and, for the 9th year in a row, Illinois leads the nation in soybean production. Many people look to farms and agribusiness as corporate and sterile because of the massive business output they produce year after year; however, we know that 96% of farms are family owned. Generations of families have committed to feeding our nation, and the world, because the food that goes in your bellies, goes in ours as well.

The Illinois Soybean Association is thrilled to be sharing our support for Resolution #23-1426. We stand in solidarity with partners in agriculture and believe that the future of agriculture in Cook County is OUR future. We look forward to feeding the world, and you, for the next generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Pitstick", written in a cursive style.

Illinois Soybean Association Chairman Steve Pitstick

CC: Cook County Farm Bureau