

**House Committee of Agriculture
Member Day 2026**

**3 Minutes
March 26, 2026**

Thank you, Chairman and Ranking Member, for the opportunity to testify before this Committee.

I represent California's 25th Congressional District. We grow dates, citrus, leafy greens, table grapes, and specialty crops that feed this nation. As the son of Farmworkers I know our farmworkers work in brutal heat, navigate drought, and manage rising everyday costs and they deserve a Farm Bill that actually works for them.

Today I want to highlight three priorities this Committee has the power to act on.

The first is the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program or the GusNIP. Here is how it works: when a family uses their food assistance benefits at a farmers market, GusNIP doubles the value of those dollars. A family with ten dollars to spend gets twenty dollars of buying power and that money flows directly to the grower at that market stand.

GusNIP's \$56 million annual baseline reaches only a fraction of the 42 million Americans on SNAP.

Advocates have called for \$350 million per year to begin closing that gap.

I urge this Committee to increase GusNIP funding to \$350 million in the next Farm Bill.

The second priority is the Local Food Purchase Assistance program and the Local Agriculture Market Program. Congress zeroed these programs out. Both of them.

The Local Food Purchase Assistance program connected local growers to food banks, school districts, and institutional buyers. Farmers in my district built those relationships. They delivered on those contracts. And then Congress pulled the rug out from under them.

The Local Agriculture Market Program supported the farmers markets, food hubs, and direct-marketing channels that smaller operations in our district depend on to survive.

These were not giveaways. They were market infrastructure. And eliminating them was a breach of faith with the agricultural communities that planned around them.

I am asking this Committee to restore these programs to full funding.

The third priority is the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. This program funds state agriculture departments to support specialty crops: fruits, vegetables, nuts, and tree crops. The things farms in my district actually grow.

The problem is the distribution formula. It does not adequately account for the concentration of specialty crop production in high-density districts like ours. We are one of the most specialty-crop-intensive congressional districts in the country and we are competing for the same dollars as districts with a fraction of our specialty crop acreage.

That's not fair and penalizes and hurts disadvantages areas that produce the most and need assistance the most. And this Committee can fix it.

I am asking my colleagues to include targeted report language directing USDA to prioritize Specialty Crop Block Grant funding for high-density specialty crop districts. The farmers back home growing world-class produce deserve a formula that reflects the scale of what they produce.

To my colleagues on this Committee — you have a real opportunity here. The decisions made in this room determine whether family farms in the Coachella Valley and Imperial County can survive and grow.

Thank you, and I yield back.