



March 22, 2023

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa  
United States House of Representatives  
408 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Re: Support for H.R. 1586 - Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023**

Dear Representative LaMalfa:

The California Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of H.R. 1586, the Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023.

California Farm Bureau is California's largest farm organization, representing approximately 28,000 agricultural, associate, and collegiate members in 56 counties. Farm Bureau strives to protect and improve the ability of farmers, ranchers, and foresters engaged in production agriculture to provide a reliable, safe, and affordable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

Given the recent history of catastrophic wildfire across the western United States, California Farm Bureau strongly supports the retention of essential wildfire prevention, mitigation, and suppression tools. The Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023 provides a critical Clean Water Act exemption that would ensure federal, state, local, and tribal firefighting entities may continue the use of fire retardant during wildfire incidents.

An essential suppression tool, fire retardant both slows the spread of wildfire and creates a boundary line of attack for fire crews. This helps provide protection for rural communities especially those in the wildland urban interface. Additionally, the use of retardant improves firefighter safety and helps safeguard the many important social and ecological values of our forests including timber resources, wildlife, historic sites, and watersheds.

Currently, the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies are operating under the assumption that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit is not required for the use of fire retardant because regulations specifically state that fire control is a non-point source silvicultural activity. Historical communications between the Forest Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also indicate a permit is not required. The continued use of retardant in effective fire suppression is of great importance to California Farm Bureau



members. Given the length of time it would take for the Forest Service to obtain such a permit, California Farm Bureau is currently participating in litigation to allow for the ongoing use of fire retardant.

The provisions of the Forest Protection and Wildland Firefighter Safety Act of 2023 are urgently important for the 2023 fire year. California Farm Bureau greatly appreciates your bipartisan approach and leadership on this critical issue. If questions about this letter, please contact Erin Huston at [ehuston@cfbf.com](mailto:ehuston@cfbf.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Johansson'.

JAMIE JOHANSSON  
President