

Jim Dyer

2727 CR134, Hesperus CO 81326 • 970-588-2292 • jadyer@frontier.net

7 April 2010

The Honorable Randy Fischer, Chairman
The Honorable Sal Pace, Vice-Chairman
The Honorable Randy Baumgardner
The Honorable Kathleen Curry
The Honorable Cory Gardner
The Honorable Dickey Lee Hullinghorst
The Honorable Marsha Looper
The Honorable Wes McKinley
The Honorable Su Ryden
The Honorable Judy Solano
The Honorable Jerry Sonnenberg
The Honorable Scott Tipton
The Honorable Edward Vigil

Re: SB10-106, Creation of a Food Systems Advisory Council

Dear Senate Health & Human Services Committee members:

I am writing to request your support and passage of SB10-106, Creation of a Food Systems Advisory Council. The passage of this bill would greatly enhance the health of the food, land, and people throughout Colorado, and bring farmers and ranchers across the state to the forefront in addressing the food needs of their local communities.

As a small scale producer and direct marketer of lamb, wool, eggs, and produce in Southwest Colorado, I am acutely aware of the difficulties in making a profit in producing quality food and fiber in today's economy. Without off-farm income it would be an impossible venture in our case. In my work helping communities assess and build healthy local food systems, I see the problems of obesity and related health problems, and a lack of healthy whole foods that typically are what local farms can best provide. Connecting these dots — farmers and ranchers with unprofitable markets to communities needing healthier and more wholesome foods is just what I hope a Food Systems Advisory Council will help us all do.

Connecting all the dots, and understanding those connections, is what a systems approach can bring to the table, and is what I have been exploring with a number of organizations, listed below, that I work with on food system development. Community economic development, preservation and profitability of agriculture, environmental preservation and restoration, and better diets and elimination of hunger are all needed in order to establish vibrant, resilient food systems in communities throughout Colorado. The proposed make-up of this Advisory Council is an attempt to bring all these interests to the table to create the understanding, coordination, and collaboration needed in these endeavors.

It is a rare food system discussion in which “Farm to School” does not arise. We know it is absolutely necessary to get the best possible food, and understanding of where it comes from and who produces it, to our children. Yet, we are frustrated by policies and procedures that don’t allow this to happen at the scale it should. Once we break down the barriers, schools could be exactly the type of stable, dependable, local markets that could help reinvigorate local agricultural production in our state. Farm to School is just one example — but one which we find most citizens can understand easily — of what a healthy local food system would look like, and illustrates quite clearly the changes needed.

Overcoming those barriers to Farm to School and other food system innovations usually means examining policies that for one reason or other don’t work for kids, consumers, or growers. This Food Systems Advisory Council is designed to bring together representatives of the agencies, departments, and organizations that can develop the recommendations for policy improvements that are needed for food systems to grow and flourish in Colorado. Such a Council would be a critical improvement for the farmers, ranchers, children, and all the people of Colorado, and one that I would welcome.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the need for this Food Systems Advisory Council, and would be glad to answer any questions you may have: Jim Dyer, 2727 CR 134, Hesperus, CO 81326; 970-588-2292; jadyer@frontier.net.

Sincerely,



Jim Dyer

Dyers Wool, Co-Owner
Southwest Marketing Network, Director
Healthy Community Food Systems, Co-Director
Southwest Colorado Farm to School Program, Coordinator
Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado, Board Member