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Rev. Charles Loflin
Executive Director
(Montclair)

November 2, 2022

Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez,
Chair, Senate Economic Growth Committee
231-L Market Street
Camden, New Jersey 08102

Dear Senator Cruz-Perez:

On Behalf of Unitarian Universalist FaithAction New Jersey (UUFANJ), I am writing in support of Senate Bill 3140, to Establish an Organic Farming Board in the Department of Agriculture. As Unitarian Universalists, we are guided by principles that include: the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process; the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we all are a part.

Earlier this year we were pleased to witness that, with leadership by your committee, S772 became law. It directs the Department of Agriculture to establish the NJ Minority, Women, and Underserved Farmer Registry. S3140 would direct the Department of Agriculture to provide services to another set of Underserved Farmers, namely Organic Farmers.

Organic farmers in New Jersey are producing locally grown, healthy organic food, while maintaining healthy ecosystems, increasing food security, and encouraging others in the Garden State to produce organic food for local consumption. We are pleased that the Legislature seeks to have the New

Jersey Department of Agriculture move in the direction of certifying organic farms, encouraging more organic and regenerative farming practices, providing marketing and other forms of support to this growing population of underserved organic farmers.

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However, in order for the needs and barriers faced by the farmers who are practicing organic and regenerative methods to be understood, they need a seat at the table. We are very pleased to see that of the seven member board proposed, two seats will be held by representatives of historically underserved communities. UUFANJ's Environmental Justice Task Force works closely with residents and leaders in these communities and we are well aware that unless clearly stated, the needs of these groups are often overlooked.

It is important that Senate Bill 3140 specifies that the Organic Farming Board includes at least one regenerative farmer as a member of the board. Regenerative farmers represent the future of healthy farming and their inclusion is critical at a time when the impacts of climate change present such an enormous threat to New Jersey. Regenerative farmers are on the front lines for mitigating those impacts by sequestering carbon and prioritizing soil health. We are optimistic that the formation of the Organic Farming Board will be a catalyst for the principles and benefits of organic and regenerative farming to become understood and thereby adopted by traditional farmers and also the public at large over time.

We applaud you and your committee members for your hard work and for considering this bill so soon after Senator Zwicker introduced it. Now we ask that you and your committee support this important bill and advocate for its approval by the entire Senate, since its companion bill A3444 has already been passed by the Assembly.

Sincerely,



Rev. Charles Loflin, Executive Director

UU Faith Action, New Jersey

CC Senator Andrew Zwicker

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