April 14, 2020

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

As we are all aware, our state and our nation is in the midst of a contagious and deadly pandemic. This unprecedented emergency requires an equally unprecedented response. We appreciate your leadership during these challenging times.

With the implementation of Executive Order 2020-42, we respectfully request clarification on the operations of u-pick farms. The experience of going to a u-pick farm is both safe and able to be followed under the restrictions identified under EO 2020-42. Individuals are able to practice safe distancing between others, and farms can create systems that eliminate person-to-person contact. Additionally, u-pick farms will address the growing food insecurities that we are seeing during this time, assist our farmers, help families access more nutritional foods and exercise and reduce traffic in grocery stores. While we realize u-pick is not an immediate concern, in the coming weeks it will be and farmers and citizens that take advantage of this great opportunity would appreciate the clarification well ahead of time. For these reasons, we ask that you clarify and encourage the operation of u-pick farms under the Stay at Home Order.

We are also encouraging you to reevaluate the allowances for greenhouses to operate during this time. We believe that it is in the best interest of the state and the agricultural community to allow for greenhouses to sell to both farming operations and individual residents. By allowing greenhouses to participate in online and call-in sales on products that are both food-based and not food-based, it will support the industry, while following the restrictions laid out in EO 2020-42. If curbside pickup can be safely done for other industries, we have the complete faith of our greenhouse industry to also be able to perform this task carefully and safely. This reevaluation will assist in greenhouses being able to have products moved and a revenue stream that will ultimately lead to many of our state’s greenhouses not being forced to permanently close their doors. The challenges this industry are currently facing is the limited season that is available to plant these products before these plants are no longer able to be available for purchase.

We respectfully request your support and clarification on these two industries by promoting our agricultural providers. By limiting the need for public interaction, while simultaneously promoting our farming and growing industries, we can prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus along with making sure that there are local, small operations that survive this pandemic and economically stressful environment.

Respectfully,

Greg VanWoerkom  
State Representative, 91st House District

Mike Mueller  
State Representative, 51st House District

CC: Gary McDowell, Director of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development