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October 16, 2014

Mayor Eric Garcetti  
City Council President Herb Wesson  
Chairman Felipe Fuentes  
Chairman Jose Huizar  
Chairman Mitch O'Farrell

Re: Endorsement of LA GMO Free Zone Motion - File #13-1374

Dear Mayor, President Wesson, Chairman Fuentes, Chairman Huizar, Chairman O'Farrell, and Honorable Councilmembers:

On behalf of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter and our 40,000 members in the Los Angeles area, I am writing to express our organization's endorsement of the Koretz-O'Farrell motion #13-1374 to make the City of Los Angeles a GMO-Free Zone with regard to the sale, distribution and growth of GMO plants and seeds.

The Sierra Club strongly supports urban gardening and agriculture as activities that help us engage in and fulfill our organization's mission to "explore, enjoy, and protect the planet."

Urban gardening and agriculture help green and beautify our city, provide educational and recreational opportunities for our citizens, and enable people to take an active role in producing healthy food to eat. Urban gardens also provide much-needed plant communities of flowering

plants and trees upon which critical pollinator species depend. Pollinator species like bees and monarch butterflies are under tremendous stress worldwide, and clean, organic urban agriculture can play a crucial role in saving these threatened species.

Urban gardening and agriculture, especially when carried out organically, also helps our environment by allowing people to grow food without the use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Organic gardens and the plants grown in them provide an important source of healthy food, and the trimmings and scraps left over also provide a rich source of material that can be used to make soil-nourishing organic compost.

All of these positive aspects of urban gardening, and especially of organic gardening, are seriously threatened by the ever-increasing threat and presence of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

The Sierra Club has grave concerns about the development and use of GMOs and their impact on the environment. We recognize that a lack of long-term studies of GMOs means that we do not have adequate information or proof that GMOs are safe for the environment or for the health of consumers. We are also aware of many studies that have suggested that GMOs are, in fact, harmful to the environment and the health of consumers.

We are also very concerned with the cross contamination that can occur when GMO seeds and plants are grown; organic gardeners take great care to plant seeds and grow plants whose quality and safety they can trust, and contamination by GMOs through seed drift and cross-pollination makes it virtually impossible to guarantee the healthfulness and organic quality of the plants they harvest after so much careful and dedicated tending of their crops. Moreover, GMO manufacturers' patent controls can lead to problems with local agriculture efforts, including organic home and community gardening, cultivation of heritage crops, and seed saving. Organic gardeners should be able to grow from organic and saved seeds, and this becomes increasingly difficult when seeds are either contaminated or subject to patent controls.

GMOs are also known --indeed are specifically made-- to make it easier to use pesticides, something the Sierra Club strongly opposes.

Studies suggest that GMOs are responsible for adverse impacts to already imperiled bee and butterfly populations. Bees and butterflies are indispensable pollinators crucial to the future of agriculture and food production, not only on distant farms, but here in our city, where home and community gardeners and small-scale, local agricultural operations, especially those that

are striving to be organic and to grow plants without the use of chemical fertilizers, are heavily dependent on the natural cycle of pollination that bees and butterflies provide.

Due to its serious concerns with all of the above-mentioned issues, the Sierra Club has adopted a policy that calls for a moratorium on the use of GMOs, and we strongly support a ban on the sale, growing, and distribution of genetically-modified seeds and plants in the City of Los Angeles.

Indeed, we congratulate you on taking this bold step that will help protect the health of our city residents, the health and very existence of our bees and butterflies, and the burgeoning growth of organic gardening and sustainable agriculture in our beautiful city.

We urge you to make every effort to support and pass this measure. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Hillary Gordon

Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Conservation Chair