March 29, 2019

Assemblymember Laura Friedman
State Capitol
Room 2137
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Friedman:

We are environmental and consumer groups writing to oppose AB 700, legislation to weaken the California Public Records Act (CPRA). This legislation would exempt from the CPRA much of the work product of California's public universities. We believe this legislation is likely to harm the environment, consumers, workers and public health.

We believe that requests under the CPRA for university documents -- including professors' correspondence -- are critical to efforts to investigate and expose corporate corruption of science, commercial influence in the research process, the commercialization of the university, lack of integrity in research, campus sexual harassment scandals and other wrongdoing by professors, researchers and universities. We understand that it is possible to abuse the CPRA, but we believe the proper remedy is not to weaken the CPRA, but rather to expose those who abuse it.

We deserve the right to know what our public universities and their researchers are doing with our tax dollars, and that right properly extends to inspecting the work of our taxpayer-paid employees, including those who work at public universities.

The CPRA is an essential part of our work to protect the environment, consumers and public health from myriad encroachments by state and local governments, and corporations. We oppose any efforts to weaken it, and we are particularly concerned that any successful effort to chip away at the CPRA could invite others, leading to a slippery slope that could diminish this crucial law in unforeseen ways, at cost to our health, our environment and our democracy.

We urge you to keep the CPRA strong, to protect our right to know, and to preserve the ability of journalists and other citizens to bring daylight and accountability to taxpayer-funded employees and our public universities.

Sincerely,

Center for Food Safety
Organic Consumers Association
Real Food Media
U.S. Right to Know