April 4, 2016

Members of the Illinois Legislature

RE: Support for SB3130

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Seed Savers Exchange to express our support for SB 3130 that would protect the interpersonal sharing of noncommercial seeds through seed libraries, seed exchanges and other seed sharing activities.

Seeds, in many ways, can be thought of as the foundation of modern civilization. Since the dawn of agriculture, more than 10,000 years ago, humans have domesticated, bred, and selected plant varieties that provide humans with nourishment needed to survive. One of the few unbroken traditions that we share with our ancestors is the saving and sharing of seeds.

For more than 40 years, Seed Savers Exchange has been a pioneer in the seed saving movement, supporting efforts to protect genetic diversity by encouraging amateur gardeners and small farmers to save and share heirloom and open pollinated seed. In 2016, our more than 13,000 members, who reside in 50 states, will offer 16,422 unique varieties of seeds and plants for exchange in our Yearbook, in what some people call “the largest seed swap in America.”

Because of this legacy, Seed Savers Exchange fully endorses the Illinois legislature’s adoption of SB 3130, which will clarify the law around seed exchanges and seed libraries – community based organizations which support local, resilient food systems that promote seed saving and sharing, provide access to seeds, and educate the community about the importance of seeds and genetic diversity. There are over 450 such initiatives in North America. These initiatives promote an important public good - the health and wellbeing of Illinois residents. SB3130, when adopted, will not allow for the sharing of patented or treated seed, or noxious weed seeds.

In 2015, the legislatures in both Minnesota and Nebraska took legislative action to change seed laws that prohibited the interpersonal exchange of noncommercial seed as well as the requirements for testing, labeling, and permitting. SB 3130 will do the same for Illinois and enable its resident’s free access to seeds, and through the seeds, healthy and affordable food.

I thank you for considering my comments and urge your strong leadership in passing SB 3130.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John Torgrimson
Executive Director