



**LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT**

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April 2nd, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Anderson, Co-Chair Hansen and Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of Land Stewardship Project's (LSP's) 4,500 member households made up of farmers, rural, urban, and suburban members I write to share our strong support of HF1795. The Farm to School and Early Care program has been a priority for LSP since 2019 when it was identified as a key way to support market access for farmers, especially beginning farmers and smaller operators, and we started organizing around this program by delivering 500 postcards from farmers to House and Senate leadership in the 2019 legislative session to support funding this program. Since then, this program has been able to serve students and children a wide range of Minnesota-grown products including chicken, pork, turkey, vegetables, fruit, wild rice and more. This program remains one of our top priorities as it is a win for farmers, a win for kids and a win for our communities.

This program creates a crucial institutional market for farmers and has been a catalyst for school districts, and now early care settings, to develop and establish buying relationships with farmers in their area that extend beyond a grant cycle. Year after year there is significantly more demand for this program than funding available. In 2023, Minnesota received \$5.4 million in requests for the program, after a federal infusion of funds through the Local Food for Schools program (LFS) and was able to award \$4.2 million to school districts for local purchasing and kitchen equipment grants.

Recently, USDA cancelled funding for the Local Food for Schools (LFS) program and Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA) that would have brought more than \$17 million over the next three years to Minnesota for local purchasing. Given this new development, we seek the committee's support to increase funding from the existing \$1.29 million/year to allow more schools and early cares to serve our kids fresh, healthy food while creating market access opportunities for our farmers.

Thank you for the committee's historic support of our nation leading Farm to School & Early Care program and thank you to Rep Nelson for his leadership on this bill and to the 15 co-authors for their support of this vital program. If you have any questions on this bill, I am happy to be a resource.

Sincerely,

Laura Schreiber

Laura Schreiber

Director, Government Relations

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