

April 14, 2024

Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
505 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Vang and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback on HF3763, the Agriculture Omnibus bill. We appreciate the thoughtful work to redefine emerging farmers as discussed via HF4908.

Thanks to your leadership, Minnesota has made great strides in our work over the last several years to support emerging farmers, and we look forward to identifying meaningful ways to expand and deepen that support going forward.

Agriculture is about food, but also so much more. Big River Farms serves as an incubator farm, which helps our farmers overcome barriers to land access, but it also offers a place for them to come together and build community. The process of building healthy soil, perennial crop cultivation and a profitable business can take multiple years, and we are committed to doing that long term work alongside our farmers.

Agriculture is also about building healthy, culturally connected communities. Having the opportunity for our farmers to connect to wholesale markets like LEAFF and Farm to School not only benefits their businesses, but also benefits the communities these programs serve. Together, we can provide healthy, more culturally connected foods to our students, food shelf participants and neighbors on a larger scale.

We see supporting emerging farmers as a long-term investment. In our experience, the need for that support continues beyond them securing land or accessing to wholesale markets as they continue to work towards sustainable farm businesses.

We appreciate this committees ongoing work to ensure the most inclusive definition of emerging farmers possible including the following considerations:

- Keeping “limited land access” inclusive of multi-year leases and those without access to land.
- Focusing on farmers with a limited net farm profit or annual gross sales of \$100,000 or less.
- Ensuring pathways of support for farmers accessing both direct and indirect markets.

We look forward to continuing to serve as a partner in bringing the voices of BIPOC farmers to this work.

Sincerely,



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