



May 5, 2022

Minnesota House of Representatives
Agriculture & Broadband Conference Committee
417 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Minnesota Senate
Agriculture & Broadband Conference Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3201
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Sundin, Chair Westrom, and House and Senate Conference Committee Members:

As the leaders of Second Harvest Heartland and The Good Acre, on behalf of our teams and the communities we serve, we want to express our support for the \$3 million in hunger-relief funding included in H.F. 4366, as well as the ongoing allocation to invest in our shared work to feed Minnesotans in need.

This funding would continue the strong partnership between farmers and the hunger-relief network. Since 2015, Minnesota's Farm to Food Shelf program has enabled Minnesota's Feeding America food banks to provide produce, milk, and as of 2020, protein, to food shelves in all 87 Minnesota counties. These are the most in-demand items at food shelves, and among the most challenging and expensive for food banks to source.

During the pandemic, food banks received support from the state and federal government to bolster our food sourcing while supporting Minnesota's agricultural community in a time of unprecedented need. Last year alone, this public funding put 7.7 million pounds of locally grown produce, 383,000 gallons of milk from our partners at Prairie Farms, and 300,000 pounds of meat from Minnesota producers and processors onto the kitchen tables of Minnesotans experiencing food insecurity.

Second Harvest Heartland also works closely with The Good Acre, having spent nearly \$325,000 of privately raised funds since 2020 sourcing almost 200,000 pounds of produce from their network of small and emerging farmers. This relationship builds on the work of The Good Acre's Local Emergency Assistance Farmer Fund (LEAFF) program, which provides underserved farmers with new market channels by paying market-rate prices for their produce, all of which is then donated to hunger-relief organizations across Minnesota.

In the program's first two years, The Good Acre worked with 62 emerging farmers to train them in wholesale marketing and provide production and business technical assistance, purchased over \$480,000 in produce from participating farms, and provided over 250,000 pounds of produce from local farmers for distribution to hunger-relief partners. H.F. 4366's allocation will allow The Good Acre to maintain LEAFF's early successes to benefit our state's farmers and the emergency food system.

Unfortunately, our fight against hunger is far from over. The persisting pandemic, record-high food prices, supply chain disruptions, and an economic recovery that's coming slowly for too many means today's hunger is tougher to live with and tougher to fight. Funds included in H.F. 4366 are a smart and effective use of state dollars that will make it possible for our organizations to fill more fridges with the staples that power Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Allison O'Toole, Chief Executive Officer
Second Harvest Heartland
Brooklyn Park, MN



Theresa McCormick, Executive Director
The Good Acre
Falcon Heights, MN