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February 8, 2021

Representative Zack Stephenson, Chair
Commerce Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: House File 11

Dear Representative Stephenson and Committee Members:

The Land Stewardship Project strongly supports House File 11 to expand eligibility for MinnesotaCare and create a public option. Our organization believes that every person deserves high-quality healthcare, regardless of their income, employment, geography, immigration status, or other factors. Addressing the failures of our current, corporate insurance-driven healthcare system to ensure coverage for all is a critically needed step to allow rural communities to thrive.

Our members include farmers, aspiring farmers, small businesspeople, self-employed people, and other residents of communities across the state. We hear repeatedly from members that the lack of affordable, usable healthcare coverage holds them back from pursuing their dreams and desired vocations. Exorbitant private health insurance costs are a financial burden for existing farmers and a barrier to getting started farming for those who would need to give up the off-farm job that currently provides their coverage. Rural residents are particularly poorly served by the individual insurance market with its limited plan options and restrictive provider networks.

MinnesotaCare is a successful, popular program that currently provides high-quality healthcare coverage, not dependent on employment, for those with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. Removing this income limit will be a huge step forward for Minnesotans' ability to care for themselves and their families, pursue the lives and careers they choose, and fully invest in their communities, including in rural Minnesota. It is a major step toward rural economic justice.

HF11's provision extending MinnesotaCare eligibility to undocumented Minnesotans is also extremely important and needed. All people in our communities deserve care, and the health and well-being of all people are interconnected. Finally, the provision to explore moving beyond the current managed care system is also a particularly important part of this bill. We can and should provide for the needs of Minnesotans without funneling public resources through unaccountable health insurance corporations.

Sincerely,

Aleta Borrud
Organizer, Policy Department