



March 2, 2021

Honorable Chair Ecklund and Members of the House Labor, Industry, Veterans and Military Affairs Finance & Policy Committee,

The devastating COVID-19 outbreaks at meat processing plants across the state have highlighted the unsuitable working conditions that thousands of meat processing workers have long suffered from. This last spring, it was estimated that nearly half of the employees tested at the JBS Worthington Plant (the largest in the state) were infected with the virus.¹ Nationally, the meat processing industry accounts for over 50,000 infections and 250 deaths,² with at least 2 deaths connected to the plant in Worthington.

Despite its role as a vector for COVID-19 spread, the industry has yet to enact consistent and basic measures to mitigate future and current outbreaks. HF 800 authored by Rep. Wolgamott is the manifestation of the decisive action Minnesota needs. In recognition of the reasonable, effective, and practical protections for Minnesota workers in this bill, MCLA is writing to express its strong support for HF 800.

The measures in HF 800 are critical as they would serve to address both short- and long-term health and workforce safety protections. In the short term, measures found in this bill would create avenues for employees and employers to work together to rectify unsafe and risky work conditions.

If enacted, the bill will prevent future outbreaks but will also address industry wide health concerns that have predated the pandemic. The health benefits for rural Minnesota would therefore be improved in both the short and long term. However, through the interconnected nature of health, this bill would serve to benefit all Minnesotans.

Thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented and historic period for our state and nation. We hope that you will do everything necessary to move this critical legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Rosa Tock
Executive Director

Adrián Rafael Magaña
Legislative and Policy Director

¹ WCCO CH.4. *JBS Pork Plant Among Meat Packing Plants Facing Scrutiny From OSHA, Congress, For COVID Outbreaks* (Feb. 14, 2021) Link [here](#).

² ProPublica. *After Hundreds of Meatpacking Workers Died From COVID-19, Congress Wants Answers* (Feb. 5, 2021). Link [here](#).