

Testimony of Tracy Ore in Support of SF 1563
February 21, 2023

Dear Chair Putnam and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee:

My name is Tracy Ore, and I am a cottage food producer and Director of the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) Community Garden. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about this important legislation. I ask that the committee please support this bill that will protect my ability to continue to transform locally grown produce into products that support the continuing operation of the garden and the communities who benefit from it.

The SCSU Community Garden is a collectively planned and planted garden that has served the community of ST. Cloud for over 18 years. Over the years, it has operated as a rich resource for teaching and learning and for bridging academics and the community. It's the campus garden in that it has been embraced as a place for faculty, staff, retirees and students to volunteer and harvest fruits and vegetables and friendships, as well as a source of sought-after produce – fresh or canned. Faculty and staff often come by the garden or Farmer's Market to get gifts for coworkers and friends and family. In addition, it is a haven where people can find a place to belong and to be part of that something bigger than themselves. In addition, the garden has supported other newer gardens, like those at St. Cloud Tech High School and Place of Hope. Finally, SCSU Community Garden can simply be a place where volunteers can get away from politics and commune with hummingbirds and butterflies as well as fresh fruits and vegetables – a place where most times the worst enemies are pesky potato beetles.

None of the above would have come to fruition without the existence of the Cottage Producer law. The ability to produce products under this legislation has been the main source of funding for the garden. Without this legislation, the garden would have gone out of existence years ago. The proposed changes to the law, especially raising the cap and the ability to ship, would further benefit the work of the garden and, therefore, the communities that thrive because of it.

Please help cottage food producers earn a living, support their enterprises, and increase access to local food by supporting this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,



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