

February 27, 2023

Dear Chair Putnam, Vice-Chair Kupec, and Members of the Committee,

I'd like to request your support for SF 1727 which includes funding for The Good Acre's LEAFF program. I am the Agricultural Director at the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC). LEDC believes in supporting market access opportunities for Minnesota's new and emerging produce farmers.

LEDC is a Latino based non-profit corporation founded and governed by Latino immigrant entrepreneurs. Vitally, it has been certified as a CDFI, receiving certification by the Treasury Department as a CDFI in 2010. LEDC has built its internal loan fund to total assets of approximately **\$5 million**. In the last **6** years we have provided **44** agricultural loans worth over **\$790,000** to **32** individual Emerging Farmers.

The LEAFF Program provides a vital service to our farm clients by giving beginning farmers clear and secure contracts at the beginning of each year. This allows our clients to easily demonstrate their expected income for the year, create more precise cashflows, and helps our loan committee feel more secure in the loan. Without TGA's work to find markets and provide contracts for farmers, many of our loan clients would struggle to demonstrate what their projected income will be for the coming year.

By investing in the LEAFF program, more fresh produce grown by emerging farmers in Minnesota will make it to local food shelves. We know that communities of color are more than twice as likely to be facing hunger in our state. Having farmers of color be included getting healthy and culturally specific crops into the hunger relief pipeline is what one Minnesota is all about.

Please support SF 1727 to help make sure more food from here is for here. The program lays a framework that will help strengthen the local food system and ensure that farmers of color have the market access they need to run a sustainable farm business. It also will help to make sure our most vulnerable citizens have access to the very best of Minnesota's bountiful harvest.

Thank you for your consideration.



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