

MESABI EAST SCHOOLS

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Dear **Committee Administrator, Hunter Pederson,**

I urge you to support the Farm to School & Early Care Bills, H.F. 2043 (Pursell) & S.F. 2158 (Gustafson) and include it in the final Agricultural Finance Omnibus bill.

I believe in Farm to School because of its unique benefits. It's GREAT for kids. It's GREAT for farmers. It's GREAT for local communities.

Farm to School is good for our kids because it gives them access to and knowledge of healthy local foods. The link between the food kids eat and their educational and health outcomes is becoming increasingly clear. Access to fresh, healthy food, starting as young as possible, fuels brain development and shapes food preference over a lifetime.

For the past 5 years I have personally witnessed the benefits of Farm to School. Mesabi East Schools has students that are willing to try new foods and menu options when they know that it is from our local farmers. Many of the students have a family member that the products are coming from and therefore have a direct connection to there food. It has also allowed some of our local farmers to increase production and provide for a known steady income. It is allowing some of our farmers to also become full time farmers and not just a hobby farm with another job for outside employment.

Our local health clinic conducts Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every 3 years. For the past 2 CHNA's the main issue that is needed to be addressed in our communities is the overall physical and mental health. In order to assure that our students have a healthy basis we need to further the funding of Free and Reduced breakfast and lunches for all children. Many students are on the fringes and would benefit from nutritious and balanced meals throughout their school day.

Please support and vote "**yes**" on the Farm to School & Early Care bills.

Sincerely,

Rachel Doherty

Farm2School Coordinator
Mesabi East Schools



