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March 3, 2023

To: Hunter Pederson, Senate Committee Administrator

We urge the Minnesota Senate Committee on Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development 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. We believe in Farm to School because of its unique benefits. It's good for kids. It's good for farmers. It's good 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 that 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. As dietitians and DTRs, we understand the importance of access to good healthy foods from an early age and its lifetime impact.

Farm to School is good for farmers. Farmers who are growing foods for their local communities is a rapidly growing population of Minnesota agriculture that needs public support and investment to expand markets.

Farm to School gives farmers a large, stable, predictable market that they can plan for in advance. It also allows them to grow value-added crops that boost the bottom line and keep more families living on and caring for the land.

Farm to School is good for local economies. A study out of Oregon showed that for every dollar spent on Farm to School programs, \$2.16 is generated in additional economic activity for the local economy. The Farm to School bill would not only support farmers directly, it would also give small businesses and entrepreneurs in greater Minnesota a boost in revitalizing their communities

This Farm to School & Early Care bill is a worthy investment that supports the health of our children, the health of our family farms, and the health of our local communities. Minnesotans can easily agree that this makes sense for our state to grow our statewide farm to school program through our public support and public investment.

We know that Farm to Schools is public policy-based evidence that works. Please support and vote "yes" on the Farm to School & Early Care bills.

Sincerely,

Toni Swanson, President

Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

cc: MAND Public Policy Panel