

2/27/23

Dear Chair Putnam and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC), I write in strong support of **SF 1592** and **SF 861**.

Senate File 1592 would create a Meat and Poultry Processing Liaison position within the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). This position would fill a significant role in the Department – helping meat and poultry processors navigate cross-departmental certification and inspection processes, amongst other responsibilities.

Senate File 861 would provide \$100,000 to the MDA for grants and other forms of technical assistance to small-scale meat and poultry processors to reimburse costs of attending courses or training, or receiving technical assistance to develop healthy, safety, and business plans.

Through our work, we have seen that processors face significant hurdles in getting started, transitioning their business to a new generation of ownership, updating or building new facilities, and more. These hurdles impact not only processors, but livestock farmers across the state as well. While the Department does a significant amount of outreach to processors and develops many resources for processors, having someone who could focus primarily on outreach would help the division be more successful in reaching and working with the processors that they serve.

As an economic development center, LEDC has over 20 years of experience in business development and providing technical assistance to Latino entrepreneurs. We have been working for the last year to create pathways for Latino entrepreneurs to start their own small meat processors in Minnesota. Latinos face many barriers to making their dreams a success and having specific funding for this kind of support is deeply needed.

This legislative session, the state has the opportunity to provide ongoing support for meat and poultry processors, assist small-scale processors in strengthening health and safety in their operations, and build a decentralized processing system that ensures all farmers have the processing services they need when and where they need it. Our livestock farmers, processors, and food system will be stronger and more resilient with these two proposals passing.

We appreciate your consideration of this bill and ask you to support **SF 1592** and **SF 861** and include them in the final Agriculture Budget.

Sincerely,



Aaron Blyth
Agricultural Director
Latino Economic Development Center