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February 15, 2023

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee:

**The Land Stewardship Project strongly supports Senate File 49 (Wiklund) and Senate File 896 (Mann).** The former would expand eligibility for MinnesotaCare to create a public option and the latter would allow undocumented immigrants to access the program. We believe that every person deserves high-quality healthcare, regardless of their income, employment, geography, immigration status, or other factors. Addressing the failures of our current, corporate-driven healthcare coverage system is a critically needed step to allow rural communities to survive and thrive.

LSP has approximately 4,500 households in our membership. Our membership includes approximately 1500 farmers as well as aspiring farmers, self-employed people, owners of small businesses, and other residents of communities across the state. Over and over again, we hear from our members that the lack of affordable, usable healthcare coverage holds them back from pursuing their dreams and desired vocations. **Exorbitant private health insurance costs are a financial burden for existing farmers and a barrier to beginning farmers, especially for those who would need to leave an off-farm job with health insurance benefits to be able to start a farm. Rural residents, in particular, are poorly served by the individual insurance market with its limited plan options and restrictive provider networks.**

MinnesotaCare is a successful, popular program that currently provides high-quality healthcare coverage, not dependent on employment, for those with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. **Removing this income limit will be a huge step forward for Minnesotans' ability to care for themselves and their families, pursue the lives and careers they choose, and fully invest in their communities, including in rural Minnesota. It is a major step toward rural economic justice.**

SF 896 extends MinnesotaCare eligibility to undocumented. **All people in our communities deserve care, regardless of their immigration status.** Our communities are healthier when we all have the care we need. Every single person deserves to have the care they need when and where they need it.

Finally, we ask that you include a study on transitioning management of public healthcare programs to the state. **We can and should provide for the needs of Minnesotans without funneling public resources through unaccountable health insurance corporations.**

**On behalf of LSP Members across the state,**

**Al Kruse**

LSP Healthcare Steering Committee Member  
Marshall, MN

**Dr. Aleta Borrud**

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