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February 6, 2023

Chair Rest and Members of the Senate Taxes Committee,

The Land Stewardship Project's (LSP) mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promote sustainable agriculture, and develop healthy communities. LSP represents over 4,500 households in Minnesota – primarily farmers and rural residents, as well as urban and suburban allies. Some of the Land Stewardship Project's greatest priorities are keeping small and mid-sized farmers on the land, increasing the number of farmers stewarding the land, and advancing the adoption of sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices.

I write in support today of Senate File 526 to provide \$22 million to Soil and Water Conservation Districts to bolster and equalize funding for the critical roles and programs they provide.

Our members have a keen interest in restoring and regenerating our soils, working to ensure all farmers have the resources they need to farm in ways that benefit their operations, their land and more broadly, our communities. The support farmers and landowners receive in both programmatic offerings and technical assistance from their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are a critical piece of ensuring more soil health practices across our state are adopted to better protect and enhance our soil, water, and climate.

The funding included in SF 526 to increase and equalize the funding available for SWCDs is a measure that will have great impacts for our farmers and especially rural communities, and we ask for the committee's support of this bill.

On behalf of our members, we urge you to vote yes on this bill. With a historic budget surplus, the legislature has a unique opportunity to deliver for farmers, rural Minnesotans, and our SWCDs this legislative session.

Sincerely,
Laura Schreiber
Policy Organizer
Land Stewardship Project