



MINNESOTA FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

9800 155th Street East, Nerstrand MN 55053

www.mfma.org ✦ info@mfma.org ✦ (507) 664-9446

March 14, 2024

Chair Putnam, Senator Lieske, and members of the Senate Ag Committee –

I am Kathy Zeman, executive director of the Minnesota Farmers' Market Association. Thank you for accepting my testimony today via zoom in support of SF 4500 to amend M.S. 28A.151, that we call the Safe Food Sampling at Farmers' Markets law.

Back in 2014, MFMA worked with MDH, MDA, City of Minneapolis, the University of MN Extension, the Local Food Advisory Committee, and Minnesota Farmers Union to create the food sampling law. Prior to 2014, food sampling and cooking demonstrations at farmers' markets and community events required a food license, but none of the available licenses really fit the situations, so few samples could be offered legally. After many meetings, we all agreed on 28A.151.

Ten years later now in 2024, we've seen the huge success that free food samples and cooking demos offered safely at farmers' markets that has increased consumption of fresh produce and food to our communities directly from their food farmers and food makers. However, we also acknowledge some areas in the 10-year-old law that could use some improvement. We once again worked together as a group to assess the changes needed, met with Senator Putnam and Senator Lieske, to discuss these modifications:

- Updated the definition of farmers' market to acknowledge that sales of food at farmers' markets are sold to more than just direct customers. Vendors are selling to restaurants; we now have licensed farmers' market food hubs that sell retail and wholesale. 1.10
- Acknowledged that 'where' a food sample was offered isn't relevant; the point is that the sample is food sold by that vendor. 1.14
- The new language in Subd. 2 (lines 2.2 through 2.9) closes an unintentional loophole. These foods are all defined as potentially hazardous, and this new language puts up better food safety guard rails for both the food vendors and the customers.
- Clarified the food sample needs to be free to the customer receiving the sample. 2.16
- Acknowledged that if samples are prepackaged, with no packaging onsite, that a handwashing station would not be required. 2.23-2.24
- Added new language requiring signage for all samples and cooking demos to include ingredients and any major allergens, again to better serve both the vendors and the customers. 2.28-2.30

We really appreciate the input and advice the agencies, MDA & MDH offered, as well as Extension, our colleagues on LFAC, and the congenial meeting with Senator Putnam and Senator Lieske and their teams, to end up with this analyzed and researched amendment to the food sampling law. Thanks for listening; I'm happy to answer questions.

Sincerely,

Kathy Zeman, Executive Director
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association

MISSION

MFMA provides services, programs, and leadership that support and promote farmers' markets across Minnesota and Tribal Nations.