

April 14, 2024

Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
3215 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Putnam and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback on SF3955, the Agriculture Omnibus Finance bill. We appreciate the inclusion of language to redefine emerging farmers as discussed via SF5049.

Minnesota has been a leader in our work over the last several years to support emerging farmers, and we look forward to identifying meaningful ways to expand and deepen that support going forward. We appreciate this committee's leadership in recognizing that the strongest solutions will come from those most impacted by these policies.

As stated in this committee's discussion, agriculture is about food, but also so much more. Big River Farms serves as an incubator farm, which helps our farmers overcome barriers to land access, but it also offers a place for them to come together and build community. The process of building healthy soil, perennial crop cultivation and a profitable business plan can take multiple years, and we are committed to doing that long term work alongside our farmers.

Agriculture is also about building healthy, culturally connected communities. Having the opportunity for our farmers to connect to wholesale markets like LEAFF and Farm to School not only benefits their businesses, but also benefits the communities these programs serve. Together, we can provide healthy, more culturally connected foods to our students, food shelf participants and neighbors on a larger scale.

We appreciate this committee's ongoing work to ensure the most inclusive definition of emerging farmers possible including the following considerations:

- Keeping "limited land access" inclusive of multi-year leases, incubator farms and those without current access to land.
- Focusing on farmers with a limited net farm profit or annual gross sales of \$100,000 or less.
- Including farmers accessing both direct and indirect markets without limitations.

We look forward to continuing to serve as a partner in bringing the voices of BIPOC farmers to this committee.

Sincerely,



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