



**LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT**

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February 18th, 2025

Dear Chair Putnam and Members of the Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and Rural Development Committee,

Today, I am writing on behalf of Land Stewardship Project's (LSP's) 4,500 member households made up of farmers, rural, urban, and suburban members in support of SF 1559. The Farm to School and Early Care program has been a priority for LSP since 2019 when it was identified as a key way to support market access for our farmers, especially beginning farmers, and we started organizing around this program and delivered 500 postcards from farmers to House and Senate leadership to support funding this program in the 2019 legislative session. Since then, this program has grown to support purchasing across our state from Minnesota farmers of an array of products including, beef, fish, chicken, pork, turkey, nutritious vegetables, wild rice and more. This program is still one of our top priorities to support as it is a win for farmers, a win for students and a win for our rural communities.

This program creates a crucial institutional market for farmers and has been a catalyst for school districts to develop and establish buying relationships with farmers in their area that extend beyond a grant cycle. Year after year there is significantly more demand for this program than funding available. In 2023, Minnesota received a federal infusion of funds through the Local Food for Schools program and was able to award \$4.2 million to school districts for local purchasing and kitchen equipment investments and that amount still did not meet the demand from schools. That year, there were \$5.3 million in requests for the program.

This past fall, MDA signed a cooperative agreement with USDA for the Local Food for Schools Program and Local Food Purchase Assistance Program that would bring in nearly \$18 million over three years to Minnesota for local purchasing. That funding is strictly for food purchasing and none of it can be used for administration of those funds. SF 1559 would allow Minnesota to be able to leverage that federal funding by utilizing

the existing state funds for the F2S program to help with the administration of those federal dollars. Of course, there is now uncertainty whether those federal dollars to support MN farmers and our school districts are still secured, and we seek the committee's support to increase funding for this program if our federal contract is not honored.

Thank you for the committee's historic support of this program and thank you to Senator Gustafson for her leadership on this bill and for all her work to make sure students are fed healthy, nutritious food every day. If you have any questions on this program, I am happy to be a resource.

Sincerely,

Laura Schreiber

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Schreiber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" and last name "Schreiber" clearly legible.

Director, Government Relations

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