

*Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> 2025*

**Dear Chair Wicklund and Members of the Committee,**

My name is Rachel Stoll. I am a Community Health Worker, the Board President of Advocates for Better Health, and the spouse of a farmer and mother of two young children in southern Winona County.

I am writing today to express my strong support for SF1858, which would fund a Fresh Bucks pilot program. In my role as a Community Health Worker, I help families navigate essential services and systems to lead healthier lives. I've witnessed firsthand how access to nutritious fruits and vegetables can profoundly impact health and well-being, particularly in rural areas. The Fresh Bucks program would build on the success of the Produce Market Bucks initiative. I was a SNAP recipient a few years ago when my oldest child was an infant. I would often go to the Winona Farmers Market and loved the Market Bucks program. As a working mom with a young child, it was not always possible for me to get to the Farmer's Market on Saturday morning, and it would have made a world of difference to be able to prioritize fresh fruits and vegetables for my family seven days per week and during the winter months.

Providing year-round access to fresh produce for all Minnesotans—whether they live in rural, urban, or suburban areas—is an important public health strategy that would benefit our state in many ways:

- **Year-round access to fresh produce:** Minnesotans who rely on SNAP benefits need the ability to purchase healthy fruits and vegetables throughout the year, not just during the warmer months.
- **Support for local retailers:** Stores participating in this program would attract more SNAP users and see an increase in sales, benefiting local businesses.
- **Stronger communities:** By boosting sales for retailers and expanding access to healthy food, this program would support local economies and contribute to the overall health of our communities.

Thank you for your time and for considering this impactful program. I urge you to support the Fresh Bucks pilot program, which would be a win-win-win for our Minnesota communities.

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