



May 5, 2021

Chair Torrey Westrom
Agriculture and Broadband Finance Conference Committee
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Mike Sundin
Agriculture and Broadband Finance Conference Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

To the Agriculture Finance and Policy Conference Committee:

West Central Initiative urges you to support the proposed funding for emerging farmers in this biennial budget. Our organization works to support the viability of farming across West Central Minnesota through technical assistance and we see the challenges that all farmers, and especially emerging farmers, face every day in this field.

The **House 7.20** and **7.24** proposals will support emerging farmers who are essential participants in our agricultural economy. These two provisions will support the legislatively created working group, which is currently operating with no dedicated funding (7.20) and will establish an emerging farmer coordinator position who will provide staff support for these farmers who have not been adequately served in the past (7.24).

Emerging farmers -- which includes veterans, women, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, young, and urban farmers -- face barriers in agriculture that were well documented in the [2020 Legislative report](#). These include access to land, capital, and training resources, as well as other issues like discrimination and access to culturally appropriate resources. The funds provided by these two proposals would allow for significant progress to be made in ensuring that Minnesota agriculture is accessible to all who call Minnesota home.

We believe that support for small- and mid-scale farmers is imperative for the resilience of our region's economy, and as such, are investing more time and resources to diversify not only the types of agricultural practices that are supported here, but the people who run those businesses. Emerging farmers in our state are an important part of the future of Minnesota agriculture. We thank you for your support of these initiatives and look forward to working with you all in the future to support Minnesota's farmers.

PRESIDENT/CEO

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