

I am so excited that this bill is being heard because it includes Farm to Early Care.

- MDA currently administers a Farm to School grant that reimburses K12 schools for their purchases from local farmers (up to a certain amount, depending on how many meals they serve). This grant was established at a pilot level after stakeholder advocacy to pass a bill in 2019, and there have been two application periods so far, with the second cohort of grantees just getting contracts signed for 2022. There were \$1.3 million in requests for the ~\$800,000 of available funding in the last cycle of applications.
- The Farm to School bill for this session is requesting to double the amount of funding for the MDA Farm to School grant to more adequately meet the growing demand for this support, increasing from \$800,000 to \$1.6 million/year.
- Ultimate goal for the path of this funding long term would be to replicate what other states have done—eventually funding to a level where it's no longer a competitive grant, but is funded so that all schools can take advantage if they choose to (or opt out).
- **The bill would also open the grant eligibility to include early care environments in addition to the K-12 schools that are currently eligible. Reaching our youngest children during this critical window of development has a great potential positive health impact and expands the markets for MN farmers to sell to.**

Thank you!



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