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Dear Chair Vang and Members of the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee,

Today, I am writing on behalf of Land Stewardship Project's (LSP) 4,500 member households made up of farmers, rural, urban, and suburban members in support of HF4163. The goal behind HF4163 is to expand eligibility to include in-home childcare settings as recipients of the MN Department of Agriculture's Farm to School and Early Care grant program to allow all childcare settings the opportunity to enjoy healthy, local food.

The Farm to School and Early Care grant program has a proven track record of feeding students, and due to the 2023 legislative session, now our littlest eaters in childcare centers can enjoy great Minnesota grown products. However, in-home childcare providers were not made eligible and in much of Minnesota in-home childcare is the primary option for childcare instead of childcare centers due to either income restraints or geographic location. In Minnesota in 2019, there were over 1,700 child care centers and more than 7,600 licensed family in-home child care programs<sup>[1]</sup> (<https://www.iatp.org/HAFA-pilot-planting-seeds>).

There are already mechanisms in place that will not put additional administrative burden on the Department of Agriculture to award many, smaller grant awards, and instead much like how childcare centers could apply for farm to school/early care funds through a sponsoring organization so too will in-home childcare providers. There is great demand from in-home childcare providers to ensure children have access to fresh, local food and start developing taste preferences early.

LSP appreciates the committee's support of the farm to school and early care grant program and hopes that this investment and program can now reach in-home childcare settings as well and increases access for low-income, rural and non-center based childcare settings. I hope that this language change earns your support.

Sincerely,

Laura Schreiber

Policy Organizer

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The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop healthy communities. LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. LSP's work has a broad and deep impact, from new farmer training and local organizing, to federal policy and community based food systems development. At the core of all our work are the values of stewardship, justice, and democracy.