



March 16, 2023

Chair Samantha Vang
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Vang and members of the committee:

On behalf of Land Stewardship Project's (LSP) 4,500 household members, **I write in strong support of HF 2563** to provide funding to the agricultural growth, research, and innovation program to support the start-up, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing facilities. Over the past few years, it has become clear that there is urgent need to support small and mid-sized meat processing facilities to address a lack of adequate processing capacity across the state. The AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing Grant has done just that and lived-up to its mission of "increase[ing] sales of Minnesota-raised livestock products by investing in equipment and physical improvements that support processing, capacity, market diversification, and market access." This program has helped many processors across the state make timely investments to tap into new markets and meet a growing demand for local meat processing.

I also **write in support of HF2562** to provide grants to partner organizations to assist meat and poultry processors with hiring and training new employees. One of the salient issues that limits the expansion of small meat processing is difficulties related to recruiting and retaining employees for these facilities. HF2562 will address this issue by providing financial resources to recruit new employees including important incentivization for additional education opportunities so that workers are best equipped to be successful in these roles.

Furthermore, these two bills complement meat processing legislation already heard in this committee (HF1302 and HF1303) to create a meat processing navigator position within the MN Department of Agriculture and provide grants to processors to support additional training opportunities. Taken together, these proposals represent a strong package that will address many areas of concern that limit the expansion of local meat processing in Minnesota.

We appreciate your consideration of these bills.

Sincerely,

Sarah Goldman, LSP Policy Organizer, sgoldman@landstewardshipproject.org

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, democracy, health and community.