

Dear Chair Samantha Vang and the House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee,

I wanted to reach out to urge the committee to reject the proposal to replace the term “emerging farmers” with “limited resource farmers” in several Minnesota Department of Agriculture programs. This change is regressive and detrimental to the BIPOC populations that programs like Beginning Farmer Equipment & Infrastructure Grants, the Down Payment Assistance Program, the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, The Good Acre’s LEAFF Program, and more were created to assist.

These programs are crucial to beginning to right some of the historical wrongs perpetuated on BIPOC famers in the form of discriminatory loan practices, redlining, land seizures, environmental racism, and generational poverty and enabling BIPOC farmers to enrich and nourish our state. Changing the language in these programs from “emerging farmers” to “limited resource farmers” would undo the recent progress in addressing the historical barriers to equitable access to farming for BIPOC populations by decentering this population in the prioritization of resources. Expanding the focus to all “limited resource farmers” fuels the recent efforts by White farmers to claim discrimination in a system that has long favored White people in the allocation of grant monies, loans, land, etc. Additionally, it diverts the conversation from institutional systems of harm towards individual grievances, undermining the true intention and power of these state programs.

I urge the committee to remain committed to resolving a long history of macro-level discrimination by maintaining the language and prioritization of “emerging farmers.” The recent advances in this direction have made me proud to be a Minnesotan, and I sincerely hope the committee does not undo that progress by approving this proposed change in language and thus contributing to a well-worn history of injustice for BIPOC populations.

Sincerely,

Isabella Hembre Conditt, District: 43B