



LOON ORGANICS

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to offer my support and encourage passage of House bill 2043 to expand funding for Farm to School, Early Care funding, and fund regional coordination. As co-owner and farmer at Loon Organics, we have been growing vegetable crops for sale to direct-markets like CSA and farmers markets for 19 years now, and were thrilled to add our local schools as a wholesale account in 2020. We are a 40-acre organic farm in Hutchinson, MN. Our family earns the majority of our income from farming, and we employ around 5 seasonal staff. In 2022, we grew thousands of pounds of produce for our local public school districts, and it has become a significant source of income for our farm. Adding in farm-to-school, has helped us continue to have a resilient, profitable business model while also decreasing our transportation and delivery expenses because we are marketing within 10 miles of our farm. We have been able to gain efficiency improvements to our farm by scaling up certain crops for the schools while increasing local produce access for our community members. Having a farm-to-school coordinator to help both farmers and food service staff work together in the best manner possible has been a big part of the continued success of farm-to-school for Hutchinson, Dassel-Cokato, and Litchfield food service districts. We have made great growth and momentum in increasing local farm products in our schools, and the interest from other MN farmers and school districts is growing exponentially. To capture this opportunity, food district partners need increased financial support to adapt to these new markets, upgrade equipment, hire support staff and train food service workers, and more.

We are pleased to work with the Hutchinson, Litchfield, and Dassel-Cokato School Districts to not only provide more product, but to also offer insight, education, and experiences as needed. As a mom to two elementary-aged students in Hutchinson, I'm thrilled that our children and their classmates have more opportunities to eat healthy, fresh, locally grown food through greater farm-to-school partnerships. This is important work that should be prioritized and funded through the State of Minnesota. Thank you for considering this bill.

Sincerely,

Laura Frerichs
Co-owner and Farmer
Loon Farm Inc.
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