



New Millennium Academy

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RE: HF1744

Madam Chair Vang and Members of the Agriculture Finance and Policy committee,

My name is Kevin Xiong (he/him) and I am the Executive Director at New Millennium Academy (NMA) in Brooklyn Center. I am writing to you all to express NMA's support for HF1744, an appropriated financial grant to the Local Emergency Assistance Famer Fund (LEAFF), and to advocate for an increase of funds appropriated to LEAFF. NMA is a public charter school that serves the surrounding Hmong immigrant and refugee community of the northwest suburbs of the Twin Cities, where 80% of our enrolled families live in poverty.

NMA has been a partner with The Good Acre's produce distribution program since its inception in 2020. The Good Acre's produce distribution program is directly funded by LEAFF. During the Summer of 2022, NMA had over 200 families and surrounding community members participate in our weekly free produce distribution events where we were able to provide culturally appropriate and locally grown produce at no cost to them. Many of the culturally appropriate produce that we sourced were requested by our families, staff and community members (e.g., green beans, thai eggplants, cilantro, and more).

Through these weekly free produce distribution events, we were able to source from local Hmong farmers with The Good Acre. Some of the local Hmong farmers that NMA and The Good Acre purchased directly from over the summer of 2022 are located within the surrounding communities of our school and live among our families and students.

We hope to sustain our weekly free produce distribution events because many of our families and community members look forward to it every year. The relationship between our families and students' relationships with the local Hmong farmers have strengthened since beginning these events. Our families and students have also gained a stronger understanding and appreciation of locally grown organic produce. On behalf of our school community and the Brooklyn Boulevard neighborhood of Brooklyn Center, we ask that you all, Chair Vang and committee members, vote in support of HF1744 and increase the amount of funds appropriated to HF1744. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin Xiong (he/him/his)
Executive Director