

Dear Chair Vang and Members of the Agriculture Committee

I am writing to request your support for additional funding to support the vital services provided by the MDA's Emerging Farmers Office to the Emerging Farmers Working Group.

The department added this office in response to the need to provide essential services to the farmers operating in the local food landscape. As you are aware, the office needs additional staffing to provide the variety of services which will help farmers navigate effectively in the local economy. Increasing the investment in this program to hire additional staff will permit the department to offer services to the wonderful farmers who are growing food for our communities, the popular farm- to-school programs, businesses, food shelves, and direct markets.

As with the emerging local food economy, these farmers are responding to the growing demand to normalize access to affordable, healthy, fresh and prepared, culturally relevant food sources. With continuing concerns about supply chains and the impact of unpredictable weather, the success of the emerging local food economy is vital to our state's food security. Providing the services identified by the Emerging Farmers Office will strengthen the farmers' capacity to operate effectively and meet the demands and needs of our communities now and in the future.

I am grateful for the MDA's leadership for emerging farmers. Please increase the department's budget in the final Agriculture Omnibus Bill to meet the need for additional staffing to provide essential services to emerging farmers.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,  
Marita Bujold  
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