



February 25, 2023

Dear Chair Vang, Vice-Chair Pursell, and Members of the Committee

I am writing to request your support for Representative Sencer-Mura's bill **HF 1744** which includes funding for The Good Acre's LEAFF program. I work at the Bemidji Community Food Shelf, and we believe in supporting market access opportunities for Minnesota's new and emerging produce farmers. By investing in the LEAFF program, more fresh produce grown by local farmers in Minnesota and especially here in Northern Minnesota, will make it to more food shelves such as ours.

The Bemidji Community Food Shelf is celebrating 41 years of service in Bemidji and Beltrami County. We have one of the largest Foodshelves in northern Minnesota. In 2022 saw a 45% increase in the numbers of people seeking help – over 28,000 people from 9,600 families came to us for emergency help. We also have a small farm from which we produce fresh produce for our clients, last year we distributed nearly 3 tons of produce from it.

Please support HF 1744 to help make sure more food from northern Minnesota is for northern Minnesota. The program lays a framework that will help strengthen our local farmers and ensure they have market access they need to run a sustainable farm business. It will help also help us to make sure our most vulnerable citizens have access to the very best of northern Minnesota's bountiful harvest in one of Minnesota's poorest counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Olson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" and "O".

Michael Olson  
Executive Director  
Bemidji Community Food Shelf  
BCFSMN.org