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Sen. Melissa Wiklund
Sen. Kelly Morrison
Sen. Liz Boldon
Sen. Robert Kupec
Sen. Jim Abeler

May 3, 2023

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee,

“We believe healthy rural communities and sustainable agriculture are not possible without addressing the racial disparities in our communities.” Land Stewardship Project’s Five-Year Plan

Land Stewardship Project members represent thousands of healthcare voters committed to building a public, affordable health care system that is not tied to employment and leaves nobody out. We are proud to be a part of a multi-racial movement in support of the MinnesotaCare Public Option that includes undocumented workers.

Currently, undocumented workers are excluded from MinnesotaCare, even though half of them make less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Line and two thirds of them are uninsured. Undocumented workers were also disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic with outbreaks occurring first in our meat processing facilities. Immigrants are on the frontlines of our food and farming system, growing, harvesting, and processing the food we all rely on. Farming and meat processing are some of the most hazardous jobs in the nation. Most of the heavy work in these industries is performed by immigrants. The pandemic has taught us that all of us are at risk when some of us don’t have access to high-quality health care. Farmers don’t vaccinate just one animal in the herd, they vaccinate them all. It’s just common sense.

Land Stewardship Project represents over 4,000 households across the state of MN. We are small and mid-sized farmers and other rural residents working to keep our communities strong. We are also urban residents, who understand the value of healthy rural communities, supporting the extensive program and policy work LSP has engaged in for over 40 years with dollars and time.

More and more, immigrants are helping to revive rural communities, providing essential services and taking jobs that are often difficult to fill. In Todd County, there are several packing plants that have long struggled to find and retain workers. Since a Latinx and Somali immigrant population started moving into the area for the work, Long Prairie, which used to be a struggling small town with a dwindling population, now has restaurants, grocery stores, and fewer empty storefronts. We need to invest health care dollars into these communities. Immigrants work, pay taxes and contribute to our communities just like everyone else. Expanding public health care is a smart investment for the people of Minnesota.

Land Stewardship Project’s Healthcare Steering Committee urges you not to leave out undocumented workers in the MinnesotaCare Public Option.

Jennifer Jacquot-DeVries, *Brainerd, MN*

Aleta Borrud, *Rochester, MN*

Al Kruse, *Marshall, MN*

Amy Barr-Saxena, *Minnetonka, MN*

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