



February 28, 2023

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

I'd like to request your support for Representative Sencer-Mura's bill HF 1744 which includes funding for The Good Acre's LEAFF program. I am the co-founder and Executive Director of Sprout MN, the state's only brick and mortar RURAL food hub. Sprout believes in supporting market access opportunities for Minnesota's new and emerging produce farmers across the state.

We also believe that the LEAFF program should be expanded to rural areas of the state that have access to many underrepresented growers, including Amish, Women, Veterans and Tribal farmers. Please consider expanding the LEAFF program to rural areas of the state.

We believe that by investing in the LEAFF program, more fresh produce grown by emerging farmers in all of Minnesota will make it to local food shelves. We know that communities of color are more than twice as likely to be facing hunger in our state. Having farmers of color be included getting healthy and culturally specific crops into the hunger relief pipeline is what one Minnesota is all about.

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

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arlene Jones, Executive Director

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