



Climate Land Leaders are working with compassion and commitment to address the climate crisis on their lands

March 20, 2024

Representative Samantha Vang, Chairperson
MN House Agriculture Policy and Finance Committee
Rep. Kristi Pursell, Vice Chairperson Rep. Paul Anderson, Republican Lead
Rep. Burkel, Rep. Cha, Rep. Frederick, Rep. Hansen, Rep. Harder, Rep. Jacob, Rep. Nelson, Rep. Rehm,
Rep. Sencer-Mura, Rep. Tabke, Rep. Olson (Ex-Officio)

RE: HF4908

Dear Representative Vang and Committee Members,

On behalf of Climate Land Leaders (CLL), I'd like to convey our concerns regarding HF 4908.

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative activates landowners and farmers as leaders who make bold changes on their lands that reduce emissions, store more carbon in soils and plants and help ensure that farms and rural communities are increasingly resilient. Climate Land Leaders exchange knowledge, on-the-ground experiences and encouragement as they tackle ambitious strategies that are proven to alleviate climate change. Our members serve as leaders on climate policy and equity initiatives, including those that support beginning and emerging farmers and advance climate smart and soil health practices.

Minnesota has become a national leader in policies and programs that support emerging farmers. Creation of the Office of Emerging Farmer, the Downpayment Assistance Grant Program and others have helped emerging farmers begin their businesses, raising crops and livestock, including food that is culturally specific to our diverse population. This increases food security, reduces poverty, uplifts the diversity in Minnesota food production, and puts more family farmers and food producers on the land. The growth in farmer numbers in Minnesota since the 2017 census of ag, while still modest, is due in part to the increase in the number of emerging farmers who are starting their farm businesses. We'd like to see more opportunities for emerging farmers and more avenues for those on incubator farms and for farm workers to transition to farm ownership or renting, so that the next census of agriculture can

show even more growth in the number of Minnesota farms among people who have often been excluded from farm ownership, rental and markets.

We are concerned that the use of USDA's definition of "limited resource" farmer in place of "emerging farmer" in portions of Minnesota statute does not include the variety of emerging farmers who exist today. This definition change could hinder the success of programs that are designed for emerging farmers. Farm workers and aspiring farmers who do not own or rent land and farmers who exclusively market via contracts such as farm to institution appear to be outside the "limited resource" definition. Also, it is important to include livestock, poultry and egg producers in a working definition. Many new and existing farmers are incorporating managed grazing in their farm businesses and creating silvopasture and perennial pastures to reduce carbon and improve soil health. Emerging farmers have been producing and harvesting protein using Halal practices, which is important to our Muslim community. By not including livestock, we are concerned that farmers raising livestock or eggs will not be given consideration unless they are also specialty crop and/or hemp producers.

Climate Land Leaders urges you to continue to address these concerns and others of emerging farmers directly affected by this legislation.

Thank you, Rep. Vang and Committee members, for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tereen M. Keaveny".

State Policy Lead, Climate Land Leaders
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