



March 2, 2023

Dear Chair Vang and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Regenerative Agriculture Alliance, I write in strong support of House File 1302 and House File 1303.

House File 1302 would create a Meat and Poultry Processing Liaison position within the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). This position would fill a significant role in the Department – helping meat and poultry processors navigate cross-departmental certification and inspection processes, amongst other responsibilities.

House File 1303 would provide \$100,000 to the MDA for grants and other forms of technical assistance to small-scale meat and poultry processors to reimburse costs of attending courses or training, or receiving technical assistance to develop healthy, safety, and business plans.

Through our work, we have seen that processors face significant hurdles in getting started, transitioning their business to a new generation of ownership, updating or building new facilities, and more. These hurdles impact not only processors, but livestock farmers across the state as well.

While the Department does a significant amount of outreach to processors and develops many resources for processors, having someone who could focus primarily on outreach would help the division be more successful in reaching and working with the processors that they serve.

The Regenerative Agriculture Alliance's mission is to scale regenerative poultry in the movement to provide a farmer driven model that showcases regenerative agriculture as the transformation shift needed to balance our ecosystems as a whole. One of our organizational priorities is to de-risk barriers to entry and stabilize markets through vibrant regional food economies. Through our work it is clear that access to safe and accessible processing is a major barrier to farmers and in turn consumers. As a result, the non-profit currently owns and operates a small poultry processing facility six miles south of the Minnesota border in Stacyville, Iowa.

2022 was our first full year of operation. As a small non-profit organization we would have greatly benefited from having access to technical assistance and resources that would be provided through the Meat and Poultry Processing Liaison position with the MDA as well as provisions as detailed in House File 1303. It is clear that the community need for processing is a barrier to farmers and in great demand. We are actively seeking resources as we make plans to expand our production capacity, training programs and internal business management systems.

This legislative session, the state has the opportunity to provide ongoing support for meat and poultry processors, assist small-scale processors in strengthening health and safety in their operations, and build a decentralized processing system that ensures all farmers have the processing services they need when and where they need it. Our livestock farmers, processors, and food system will be stronger and more resilient with these two proposals passing.

We appreciate your consideration of this bill and ask you to support HF 1302 and HF 1303, and include them in the final Agriculture Budget.

Sincerely,

Diane Christofore

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Christofore".

Executive Director

www.regenagalliance.org

952 201 8852 4597 315th Street West Northfield, MN 55057