
Dear Ms. Representative and senators,

My name is Jovita Morales, indigenous woman. Living in Minnesota for more than 25 years. I am writing to express my support for S.F. 2604/HF 2784, the bill to help the Women's Environmental Institute develop their plan for a farm incubator program in cooperation with SAFI, the Somali American Farming Institute.

Since 2010, I have known Karen Clark. I worked with WEI at their farm as a founder of Mazahua Women Leaders, a Latina group named after my home region in Mexico. Our team of family and friends wanted to try to grow organic peanuts as a specialty crop in Minnesota, WEI offered us some space and support on their organic farm near North Branch to try to begin that dream. We applied for a grant from MISA (Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture through University of MN) but were not able to get it. Although we were somewhat successful in growing a small amount of organic peanuts and to sell them at a farmer's market WEI worked with, WEI was not able to offer all of the kinds of support we would have needed at that time.

For example, we would have benefitted from being able to use more of WEI's irrigation equipment and hoop house space to extend our growing time. It was also a challenge to travel to the farm every week to keep up with the weeds and watering. We understand this legislation would help provide farmers like us with help to have more equipment, space and support to be successful. We would also want to take more of the farming classes WEI offers.

We would like the chance to work with SAFI and WEI and urge you to pass this legislation to make that possible for us and others like us who want to become successful emerging farmers in Minnesota.

Thanks.

Sincerely,

Jovita morales