



5/05/2021

Chair Torrey Westrom
Agriculture and Broadband Finance Conference Committee
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Mike Sundin
Agriculture and Broadband Finance Conference Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Westrom, Chair Sundin and members of the conference committee:

On behalf of the Latino Economic Development Center, I am writing in support for the funding for the Emerging Farmers Working Group (**House 7.20**) and the coordinator position for Emerging Farmers (**House 7.24**). These two initiatives will improve MDA's service to emerging farmers, which include Veterans, women, Indigenous farmers, immigrants, young farmers, and farmers of color. Minnesota has a rich agricultural tradition, and all Minnesotans should be able to participate in this vibrant sector.

These two proposals support the work of the Senate and House agriculture committees to support the future of Minnesota agriculture. We all know that the average age of farmers is increasing, and there is a dire need for new farmers to take on our working lands. These proposals will create new opportunities for aspiring farmers to establish family farms that contribute to our economy, our rural communities, and our food security.

Thanks to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and our legislature, we at LEDC were able to distribute \$340,000 in CARES Act Funds to Black, Indigenous and people of color agricultural producers and workers in Minnesota who had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These two proposals (House 7.20 and 7.24) will continue this important investment in the future of Minnesota agriculture.

At LEDC, we plant the seeds of respect, pride, and financial freedom for future generations of Latino farmers. We strive to provide a complete one-stop agricultural business program for all of our clients. Over the last 10 years, LEDC has developed multiple ways to help Latino farmers in Minnesota both start and grow their farm businesses. We provide technical assistance, business development, access to capital and markets, as well as specialize in Organic and GAP certification education and technical assistance. We believe all of these services provide the farmers that we work with the best possibility of long-term success. LEDC has been a CDFI for over 10 years and we have distributed over \$600,000 of loans and grants to over 50 BIPOC producers in Minnesota. LEDC is a certified lender for Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority's Farm Micro-Lending program and has a proven ability to connect small-scale BIPOC farmers with direct financing for their operations.



**Latino Economic
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Thank you for all you do to support Minnesota's agricultural community and economy. We look forward to building a vibrant and inclusive future together.

Sincerely,

Henry Jiménez
Executive Director
Latino Economic Development Center
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