



April 21, 2021

*Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives*

RE: Support for provisions in Agriculture & Rural Development Omnibus Bill (SF 958 /HF1524)

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our coalition of more than 70 environmental and conservation organizations and the Minnesota residents we represent, thank you for your work during this challenging year and particularly difficult week.

From health care to climate change, farmers face challenges that make their commitment to stewarding the land more difficult than it should be. Our solutions should address these problems holistically.

We would like to highlight our support for a number of provisions in the House version of SF 958, the Agriculture & Rural Development Omnibus Bill, that will help to support the building and retention of resilient farms and thriving communities across Minnesota.

#### **Advancing Opportunities for New Farmers**

Article 1 Section 2:

- Increases connections between Black, brown, Indigenous, and immigrant farmers and farming programs and opportunities across the state.
- Creates farmland access teams to provide potential beginning farmers with assistance.
- Supports emerging farmers with the establishment of an Emerging Farmer Office and coordinator and account.
- Builds connections in the city through the Urban Youth Agricultural Education and Urban Agriculture Community Development.

#### **Providing Access to Healthy, Local Food**

Article 1 Section 2: **Provides access to healthy, local food** through the Good Food Access Program and the Farm-to-School program.

## Expanding Markets, Product Processing Facilities

Article 2, Section 4: **Establishes a grant program to help farmers finance cooperatives** that organize for purposes of operating an agricultural product processing facility or marketing an agricultural product or agricultural service.

## Protecting the Health of Pollinators, Water, Wildlife and People

Neonicotinoids pesticides have a devastating effect on Minnesota's pollinator populations, impact bird health, and were recently found to be in 70% of white-tailed deer across Minnesota, even from our deepest forests.

Article 2, Sections 9-11: **Guides stewardship of pesticide-treated seeds.** These sections:

- require a written warning on packaging for neonicotinoid-treated seeds
- prohibit selling seed treated with neonicotinoids as food, feed, oil, or ethanol feedstock; and
- prohibit disposal of seed treated with neonicotinoids in a manner not consistent with the product label, where applicable, or near a drinking water source, creek, stream, river, lake, or other surface water, in compost, or by incineration within a home or other dwelling.

Thank you for the investments this bill makes in Minnesota's present and future farmers, their health, and the communities that they build.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse  
Executive Director

Alliance for Sustainability  
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis  
Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability  
Cannon River Watershed Partnership  
Clean Water Action Minnesota  
CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)  
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas  
Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Land Stewardship Project  
League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region  
Legacy of Nature Alliance\*  
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter  
Pesticide Action Network North America  
Pollinate Minnesota  
Pollinator Friendly Alliance  
Renewing the Countryside  
Resilient Cities and Communities\*  
St Croix Oak Savanna Chapter,  
Wild Ones Native Landscaping  
Vote Climate  
Wilderness in the City

*\* indicates not an MEP member*