

To: Members of the Minnesota House or Representatives and Minnesota Senate

Re: The Beginning Farmer Tax Credit (HF 1546)

March 14, 2019

Dear Members,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong support for House File 1546 (Lippert, Poppe, Brand, Vang, Wazlawik).

This program was created to increase access of affordable land for young and beginning farmers in the state who do not have access to inheritable land by providing a state property tax credit to landowners to sell or rent land or assets to a qualified beginning farmer. In its first year (2018), over 800 young and beginning farmers took advantage of the program.

This bill would ensure that young and beginning farmers who already completed an approved farm business management course in the last 10 years would be qualified for the program, without retaking such a course.

The program also provides a tuition credit for young and beginning farmers to take an approved farm business management course. House File 1546 would remove the requirement for applicants to prove profitability potential. If aspiring farmers, who may not have land yet, are applying for but have not yet taken a farm business management course, they likely do not have the skills to prove profitability potential, particularly in the current farm economy.

Finally, this bill sets aside 20% of the funds for beginning farmers of color, women beginning farmers, and beginning farmers with disabilities. Our state's diversity is increasing, yet .7% of land-operating farmers in Minnesota are people of color (USDA, 2012). Women make up half of our population, yet only 25% of land-land operating farmers in Minnesota are women (USDA, 2012). These applicants would not be limited this 20% of funds, and if the 20% of funds are not all used by September 30 of each year, any applicant would have access to it.

We believe it is our state's responsibility to intentionally create land access and farm business management training for groups of Minnesotans who have been historically and systemically denied access to land and resources.

We thank you for your consideration and urge you to support this important legislation and its inclusion in the Omnibus Agriculture and Food Policy Bill.

Sincerely,
[signatures]