



2023 LSP LOBBY DAY PRIORITIES



AGRICULTURE

Climate Implementation Coordinator Position

*House Omnibus: Included.
Senate Omnibus: Not included.*

Establish a new position in the MN Department of Agriculture (MDA) to (a) coordinate the department to make measurable progress on the Climate Action Plan, (b) coordinate efforts to seek federal funds for climate-related initiatives, and (c) develop strategic partnerships.

Soil Health Financial Assistance Program

*House Omnibus: \$250k per year.
Senate Omnibus: \$1M per year.*

Reduce the barriers to adopting soil health practices (i.e. with grants for specialized equipment, developing grazing plans, integrating perennials) by growing the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program with at least \$1M per year.

Farmland Down Payment Assistance Grant Program

*House Omnibus: \$750k per year.
Senate Omnibus: \$1.25M per year. Some barrier reduction language.*

Provide \$1.25 million per year for the Farmland Down Payment Assistance Grant Program, reduce barriers to accessing the program, and prioritize emerging farmers in awarding grants.

Emerging Farmers Office

*House Omnibus: \$400k through FY 2027 with a base of \$500k.
Senate Omnibus: \$550k per year with a base of \$350k.*

Reduce barriers and challenges for emerging farmers by growing the Emerging Farmers Office from one full-time staff member to five full-time staff members and support new programming.

PRIMARY LSP STAFF CONTACTS:

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Farm to School Funding + Coordinator

*House Omnibus: \$1M per year, coordinator established.
Senate Omnibus: \$1.15M per year, no coordinator.*

Increase ongoing funding for the Farm-to-School Program to \$1 million/year. Expand the eligibility to include early childcare providers, and create a full time Farm-to-School Coordinator position.

Farmers' Markets Infrastructure & Marketing

*House Omnibus: Not included.
Senate Omnibus: Included.*

\$100,000 per year for a pass through grant to Minnesota Farmers' Market Association to award grants to markets to support aggregation and food hub services, trainings, infrastructure, establishing SNAP/EBT and more at farmers' markets.

Meat + Poultry Processing Liaison Position

*House Omnibus: Included
Senate Omnibus: Included*

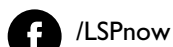
Create a new position in the MN Dept. of Ag with a 50% federal funding match to support meat and poultry processors in navigating certification and inspection, developing health and safety plans, getting established or transitioning their operation, and more.

Small Meat Processor Training Grants

*House Omnibus: Not included.
Senate Omnibus: \$100k*

Provide \$100,000 to the MN Dept. of Ag for grants to small meat and poultry processors to reimburse for health, safety, and business planning courses and trainings.

**LSP SOCIAL MEDIA,
WEBSITE, + PODCAST:**



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LSP's Ear to the Ground

ENVIRONMENT

MPCA Community Board

House Omnibus: Included.
Senate Omnibus: Not included.

Re-establish the MPCA Community Board, which operated as the Citizens' Board from the inception of the MPCA in 1957 until 2015. The board was the intended final decision-maker for the agency and, among other responsibilities, oversaw permitting and environmental review. Reinstating the Board would restore transparency in agency decisions, create more opportunities for meaningful public engagement, and would put decision-making power back into the hands of regular Minnesotans.

Fish Kill Investigations

House Omnibus: Included.
Senate Omnibus: Included - preferred language.

Following the August 2022 fish kill in Rush Creek in Winona County, this bill has become a top priority of LSP. It would strengthen the inter-agency response to fish kills by incorporating public health aspects of fish kills, speed up response time, improve public notices, and more.

LEGACY

Soil Health Cost-Share & Grant Dollars

House Omnibus: Various programs included.
Senate Omnibus: Various programs included.

Reduce the barriers of adopting soil health practices (i.e. cost of specialized equipment, tight profit margins) through Clean Water Fund cost-share and grant programs, including soil health equipment grant programs.

ABOUT LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Keeping the land and people together since 1982.

MISSION: To build a just and sustainable farm and food systems and healthy communities.

MEMBERSHIP: 4,500 households in the Upper Midwest, primarily in Minnesota. Approximately 1/3 of households are small- and mid-sized farms, 1/3 are residents of rural communities, and 1/3 are residents of population centers in both Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

MinnesotaCare Public Option

House Omnibus: Included with a requirement to transition.
Senate Omnibus: Included with a study to transition.

Pass the MinnesotaCare Public option so that all Minnesotans, including self-employed farmers, have accessible, affordable, high-quality health insurance, regardless of income level. Include a requirement to transition to state-administered public healthcare programs, rather than contracting private corporations for this purpose.

COMMERCE

Prescription Drug Accountability Board

House Omnibus: Included.
Senate Omnibus: Included.

Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board and a related advisory council to review the cost of prescription drugs and set upper payment limits for drugs whose cost creates an affordability challenge to the state health care system or patients.

LSP POLICY & PROGRAMS WORK

POLICY ORGANIZING: Build power to change local, state, federal, and corporate policies that consolidate wealth and power into fewer hands while endangering the health of people, communities, and the environment.

COMMUNITY-BASED FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM: Organize communities to expand local and regional food systems in which food is grown with high levels of stewardship, access to affordable and high-quality local food grown is increased, and inequities in the food system are addressed.

FARM BEGINNINGS PROGRAM: Train aspiring, beginning, and established farmers on how to successfully start and sustain a farm economically, environmentally, and socially.

LAND ACCESS + LAND LEGACY PROGRAM: Organize landowners, retiring farmers, and emerging farmers to create pathways for transitioning farmland to people who want to farm.

SOIL HEALTH PROGRAM: Organize farmers and landowners to increase the implementation of soil health practices through field days, learning hubs, workshops, and on-farm research.



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Investing in Rural Resiliency

The goal of soil health cost-share and grant programs and staff positions, are to remove financial barriers that often limit farmers' ability to put in place innovative, soil-smart measures. What's on the table this legislative session?

- Up to \$1 million per year for the Department of Agriculture's Soil Health Financial Assistance Program
- \$6.03 million per year from the Clean Water Fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for financial and technical assistance.
- \$3.5 million per year from the Clean Water Fund for the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program.
- \$1.5 million per year to from the Clean Water Fund for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for technical assistance, research, demonstration, and promotion projects on properly implementing best management practices and vegetative cover, and more precise information on nonpoint contributions to impaired waters, and for grants to support on-farm demonstration of ag projects.
- \$1.75 million per year from the Clean Water Fund for grants to farmers for specialized equipment to implement soil-healthy practices.
- \$150,000 for a Climate Coordinator at the Department of Agriculture to help implement the State Climate Action Framework, work across agencies to support climate programming, and secure federal dollars for Minnesota.
- \$1.25 million for the Continuous Living Cover Supply Chain Development Fund to support enterprises and supply chains. These annual and perennial crops build soil health, diversify farmers' bottom line, and are a part of the climate solution.
- \$22 million to equitably fund Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) so that each region has the resources they need to provide technical assistance for farmers and be the boots-on-the-ground support for the implementation of soil-healthy practices.

30-75%

The amount of carbon soils have lost since tillage began.

25,000 gal

The amount of water per acre that 1% of organic matter can hold in the top 6 inches of soil.

90%

The percentage of soil functions organic matter controls.

8-10%

The annual percentage of greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed to avoid climate catastrophe.

5-15%

The annual percentage of greenhouse gases soil organic matter has the potential to sequester.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Soil Health:

The continuing capacity of soil to function as a biological system; increase soil organic matter; improve soil structure and water and nutrient holding capacity; and sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Soil Organic Matter:

Soil organic matter is the fraction of the soil that consists of plant or animal tissue in various stages of breakdown, including plant and animal detritus, cells and tissues of soil microbes, and substances that soil microbes synthesize.

5 Principles of Soil Health

Armor the Soil: Grow plants and utilize plant residue to keep soil covered.

- *Benefits:* Prevents soil erosion, loss of moisture from soil, compaction of soil, and weeds. Moderates soil temperature. Provides habitat for all critters in the soil ecosystem.
- *Integrate:* Cover crops, perennial crops, managed rotational grazing.
- *Avoid:* Bare soil.

Minimize Soil Disturbance: Limit biological, chemical, and physical disturbance.

- *Benefits:* Protects soil organic matter and soil ecosystem from being damaged. Prevents soil erosion and soil compaction. Reduces amount of soil carbon released into the atmosphere. Protects water from chemical pollution.
- *Integrate:* Low-till and no-till systems, managed rotational grazing, organic production or reduced chemical use, perennial crops.
- *Avoid:* Over-grazing, over-application of agrochemicals.
- *Limit:* Agrochemical use, plowing/tillage.

Increase Plant Diversity: Just as biodiversity creates other kinds of healthy ecosystems, a diversity of plants builds a functional soil food web.

- *Benefits:* Prevents draining nutrients and can restore soil nutrients, ensures a functional soil food web, builds resiliency.
- *Integrate:* Managed rotational grazing, cover crops - especially cover crop mixes and interseeding, polycultural systems, diverse rotations.
- *Avoid:* Monocultures, lack of crop rotation.

Keep Living Roots in the Soil: Plants on top and roots underneath 365 days per year creates an overall healthy soil ecosystem.

- *Benefits:* Prevents soil erosion, loss of moisture from soil, soil compaction, weeds, and water pollution. Supports a healthy and functional soil ecosystem and soil food web.
- *Integrate:* Perennial crops, pasture, cover crops.
- *Avoid:* Bare soil.

Integrate Livestock: Animals, plants and soils have long interacted in a synergistic way to build enough organic matter to make soil self-sustaining. Integration requires getting livestock onto the land grazing in a way that spreads nutrients (aerobically decomposing manure) evenly, while plants and soils are given balanced periods of disturbance and rest.

- *Benefits:* Well-rounded ecosystem and food web, supercharged soil biology, invasive species management, provides the natural disturbance many natural systems need, requires pasture and/or cover crops.
- *Integrate:* Managed rotational grazing with pasture or cover crops.
- *Avoid:* Factory farming.

WHAT ARE FARMERS SAYING?

*"Farmers are suffering economically, and our environment is starting to say, 'I need help.' **We can manage these twin crises by focusing on a common solution: building healthier soil.**"*

-Tom Cotter, Mower County Crop & Livestock Farmer

"These practices take time and persistence to get right, but are worth the investment both for farmers and the public. The conferees can help farmers take that first step toward making the state a national leader in building healthy, resilient soil."

-Bryan Simon, Grant County Livestock Farmer



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Regional Food Systems

When we build robust community-based food systems, we are creating strong, resilient, and interconnected communities. Community food webs are collective hubs of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption that strengthen regional environmental, economic, and social health.

WHAT'S ON THE TABLE THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION?

1. **\$1.25 million for the Farm to School Grant Program and \$150K for a full-time coordinator at MN Dept of Agriculture** and extending eligibility to early childcare and education centers. The MDA Farm to School grant program reimburses school districts for purchases from local farmers, supporting our rural communities, creating new market opportunities and providing nutritious meals for our students and littlest eaters. (Senate Ag Omnibus)
2. **\$100,000 for a pass through grant to Minnesota Farmers' Market Association** to support infrastructure, trainings, food aggregation and establishing SNAP/EBT at farmers' markets in MN. MN has 370+ farmers' markets that support thousands of direct marketing producers, many of them emerging farmers. (Senate Ag Omnibus)
3. **\$300,000 for the Good Acre LEAFF Program** to support sourcing produce from emerging farmers to provide culturally relevant foods to hunger relief partners free of charge. (Senate Ag Omnibus)
4. **\$100,000 to facilitate the startup and expansion of co-packing facilities, commercial kitchens and other supply chain infrastructure.** This opens up the opportunities for market access, value added products, and creating more resilient food systems across our state. (House Ag Omnibus)

WHAT ARE FOLKS SAYING?

"Because of the farm to school program, my school districts are on track to purchase over \$630,000 worth of local food in just three years. Our F2S program feeds over 6,300 students, inspires twelve kitchens, and purchases fresh fruits + vegetables, beef, dairy, dry beans, honey, and maple syrup from over a dozen farmers and ranchers from three counties."

-Aimee Haag, Farm to School Coordinator, Hutchinson, Litchfield, Dassel-Cokato School Districts

"Farmers markets were probably the biggest factor in our success. Being able to talk directly with folks at the markets who are asking questions or buying your products goes a long way to gaining their trust. Through these markets we have gained long-term customers who make up the majority of our yearly sales."

-Morgan LaSalle, ForageScape Farm, Onamia MN

Meat & Poultry Processing

The lack of adequate small meat processing facilities leaves producers across the state making tough decisions about the viability of raising livestock on our farms. Small meat processors serve a crucial role in supporting strong regional food systems. There are bills moving this session that support these processors.

Meat & Poultry Processing Liaison

The new meat processing liaison position at MN Dept of Ag will provide needed support to processors, especially those processors just getting up and running. MDA is the subject-matter expert on inspection regulation and deals with inspection questions on a day-to-day basis so they are very well equipped to answer questions and help folks navigate this process. In addition, this position will leverage federal resources through a 1-1 funding match. This proposal also has widespread support – it was included in the Governor’s budget, and many organizations including the MN Farmers Union, Farm Bureau, MN Association of Meat Processors, the Regenerative Agriculture Alliance, and Latino Economic Development Center have all submitted letter of support for this proposal.

Meat Processor Training Grants

This new program would provide training grants to processors so processors have the skills necessary to update, expand, transfer or transition their processing facilities. Meat and poultry processors under federal or state inspection need to have Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) and a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan(s) in place and developing these procedures and plans can be difficult and often processors have many questions. These grants would provide needed financial support so that processors have resources to develop these plans in addition to business plans. This proposal also has widespread support from a number of organizations.

LSP also supports additional funding for grants to facilitate the start-up, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing facilities.

BUILDING COMMUNITY FOOD WEBS AT LSP

Using an assets-based participatory approach, LSP and its partners have created a road map to expand local foods production, distribution, and sales along the Minnesota River Valley in West Central Minnesota. This road map was informed by two (2) community foods listening sessions, two (2) community asset mapping sessions, and a regional local foods forum. In these sessions we heard from over 109 community members from the communities of Madison, Appleton, Montevideo, Granite Falls and the Upper Sioux Community.

This summer we will create an aggregation and distribution route connecting 7 communities to drop off and pick up local products circulating them to multiple market channels and consumers in the region. If you'd like to learn more, contact Amy Bacigalupo at amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.



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REINSTATING THE MPCA COMMUNITY BOARD

HISTORY OF THE MPCA BOARD

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) was established with a Citizens' Board in 1967 and existed for 48 years. The Board was established bipartisanly to ensure there was accountability and transparency in the agency. It served as a check on the actions of the agency staff and commissioner. The Board rarely overturned Commissioner and/or staff decisions when the decisions did not reflect the potential impacts of a project and wasn't in the best interest of Minnesotans and our environment. Regardless of the final decisions they made, Minnesotans were able to make their voices heard, decisions were made in public, and there was a proper avenue for checks and balances on the agency.

LEGISLATION

Legislation to reinstate the MPCA Citizens' Board as the MPCA Community Board was introduced by Senator Foug Hawj (DFL - Saint Paul) and Representative Kristi Pursell (DFL - Northfield). The bill (Senate File 1937 & House File 2076) was heard in the Senate State Government Committee and the House Environment & Natural Resources Committee.

Testifiers in favor of the bill included numerous farmers, former MPCA Board members, democracy organizations, environmental justice organizations, and others. The bill was rolled into the House Environment & Natural Resources Omnibus Bill.

Senate Authors include:

Senators Foug Hawj, Erin Murphy, Aric Putnam, and John Marty.

House Co-Authors include:

Representatives Kristi Pursell, Jess Hanson, Erin Koegel, Laurie Pryor, Steve Elkins, Zack Stephenson, Emma Greenman, Mike Freiberg, Kristin Bahner, Mohamed Noor, Frank Hornstein, Sydney Jordan, Lucy Rehm, Brad Tabke, Nathan Coulter, Robert Bierman, Ginny Klevorn, Dan Wolgamott, Samantha Sencer-Mura, Peter Fischer, Sandra Feist, Brion Curran, and Amanda Hemmingsen-Jaeger.

What do we need from supportive legislators?

Communicate your support for reinstating the MPCA Board to:

- Speaker Melissa Hortman
- Majority Leader Jamie Long
- Chair Rick Hansen
- Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic
- President Bobby Joe Champion
- Chair Foug Hawj

WHAT DO MINNESOTANS HAVE TO SAY?

"Here is the best evidence of success [of the MPCA Board]: I can't tell you how many times people who appeared before us, even those who did not get the final decision they wanted, still came up to thank us for listening to them and explaining the rationale for the decision we made. They saw and personally experienced that the MPCA Citizens' Board was democracy personified."

Loni Kemp, Former MPCA Board Member
Canton, Minn.

"Since the Board was eliminated, democracy has been weakened. The MPCA Commissioner makes all decisions, with no mandated, regular, public process, and without input from a Citizens' Board, comprised of members with a balance of diverse interests, backgrounds and technical expertise."

Jim Riddle, Former MPCA Board Member and
Farmer, Winona, Minn.

"The citizen board would review MPCA policy proposals in open meetings. It worked because the public was better informed, and agency proposals were improved through broader input... Government transparency improves decision-making and builds public understanding, as the MPCA's Citizens' Board showed for 48 years. A policymaking board also insulates commissioners from inevitable political pushback by ever-present disgruntled legislators."

Ron Way, Former MPCA Assistant
Commissioner for Public & Legislative Affairs

THE BASICS OF THE BOARD

- **Like the Public Utilities Commission, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the Board of Animal Health, this is a governing board, not an advisory board.** Advisory boards can be appropriate, but without any authority, they are unable to provide checks and balances.
- **Non-profits and public corporations are required to have boards to be accountable to the public. Our agencies should as well.** Other than the Governor and Lt. Governor, every member of the Executive Branch is an unelected decision-maker.
- **Right now, decisions are delivered to Minnesotans and the decisions aren't always thoroughly justified.** When the Board existed, agency staff had to justify their recommendations to the Board, and thus, the public. The MPCA Citizens' Board rarely disagreed with the MPCA Commissioner and MPCA staff, but the public could at least understand the reasoning.
- **Right now, it can be difficult to learn about proposals and public comment periods. Once posted, the public has approximately 30 days to discover the proposal, comprehend it, and submit a written comment, which do not receive a response.** With the Citizens' Board, the public could provide comments at board meetings and receive responses from board members. It was a much more engaging process than sending in a form comment and waiting for the decision to be made.
- **The Board listened to the concerns of Minnesotans, giving space for residents to make their voices heard.** Whether or not a particular decision went their way, it created a space for folks to feel heard.
- **Agency heads in St. Paul shouldn't be making decisions for rural communities. They should be making decisions WITH rural communities.** Whether you're anti-factory farm or anti-clean cars rules, you deserve to have a real voice in the decision-making process.
- **Decisions may not be different after reinstating the Board, but the decision-making process will be more engaging, transparent, and accountable.**
- **Members of the MPCA Community Board would be nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Minnesota Senate.** The Governor will still have the authority to choose who leads the agency. This is not a partisan board, it is carefully chosen and carefully confirmed.
- **The MPCA Community Board will de-politicize agency decisions.** Commissioners ultimately answer to the Governor, who inherently makes politically-influenced decisions (especially if they plan to seek re-election). Board members do not face these same political pressures and can focus on making decisions based on existing statutes. Additionally, Board members won't have political donors or lobbyists to answer to.
- Opponents claim that reinstating the board would make the environmental review and permitting processes longer and more expensive, **but they have no data or proof to back up that claim.**

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE MPCA BOARD:

A.C.E.S. | Audubon Minnesota - Iowa - Missouri | Clean River Partners | Clean Water Action | Clean Up our River Environment (CURE) | Climate Generation | Climate Land Leaders | COPAL | Dodge County Concerned Citizens | EcoFaith | Environmental Justice Table | Environmental Justice Coordinating Council | Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness | Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest | Friends of the Mississippi River | Greener Pastures | Hamline University Center for Justice and Law | Honor the Earth | Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy | ISIAH | Izaak Walton League - Minnesota Division | Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance | Land Stewardship Project | Lakeville Friends of the Environment | League of Women Voters Minnesota | Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota | Midwest Farmers of Color Collective | Minnesota350 | Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy | Minnesota Environmental Partnership | Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light | Minnesota Ornithologists Union | Minnesota Trout Unlimited | Minnesota Voice | Minnesota Well Owners Organization | Pesticide Action Network | Pollinate Minnesota | Pollinator Friendly Alliance | Project Sweetie Pie | Renewing the Countryside | Responsible Ag in Karst Country (RAKC) | Save Lake Superior Association | Save our Sky Blue Waters | Sierra Club North Star Chapter | St. Paul Audubon Society | TakeAction Minnesota | The Good Acre | UFCW Local 663 | Upper Mississippi River Region of the League of Women Voters | Vote Climate | Water Legacy | Wild Rivers Conservancy | 100% Campaign

Prescription Drug Affordability Board and stopping Rx Price-Gouging Fact Sheet

Everyone deserves access to affordable medicine

No matter our age, race, income or zip code, everyone deserves access to affordable medicine. For years, pharmaceutical corporations have legally price-gouged life-saving medicine causing prescription drug costs to skyrocket in the United States. This contributes to increased health insurance premiums and growing numbers of people who are unable to afford the prescriptions they need.

This legislation (HF17, SF168) stops price-gouging of generic and off-brand prescription drugs and establishes a Prescription Drug Affordability Board that has the authority to lower drug costs by setting statewide upper payment limits (UPLs) for additional high cost drugs. This helps patients, payers, purchasers, and providers afford medications, building on federal initiatives passed in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board and Stop Rx Price-Gouging

The goal of a Prescription Drug Affordability Board is to identify the UPLs at which the people who need the drug can afford to buy it, and the insurers, purchasers, and state programs can afford to provide the drug to everyone in the state who should get it. The Board is composed of seven members appointed by the Governor. The Board will review prescription drugs that may pose affordability challenges to Minnesotans including:

- New brand name prescription drugs which enter the market at \$60,000 or more per year or course of treatment;
- Existing brand name medications which increase in price by \$3,000 or more per year or course of treatment; and
- Existing generic medications which increase in price by 200% or more per year or course of treatment.

The Board will consider a broad range of information when evaluating the affordability of a drug, including consultation with the Advisory Council, comments submitted by the public, and justifications provided by pharmaceutical manufacturers. After this review, the Board may vote to set an upper payment limit, which applies to all public and private payments and reimbursements for that drug for Minnesotans. The Board will thoroughly monitor, assess and use their authority where necessary to mitigate the impacts of high cost prescription drugs on Minnesotans and our healthcare system.

Lower Prescription Drug Costs Now

Out of control prescription drug costs hurt all of us, and drive up the cost of our entire healthcare system. As Minnesotans continue to be harmed by high prescription drug costs, the state has the responsibility to take meaningful action, and broad public support to do so. Eighty-seven percent of Minnesotans support this commonsense action. (Health Care Value Hub, Nov. 2020). Six states have already established similar Boards.

Stories from Minnesota

Prescription drugs don't work if people can't afford them.

Deborah W. of International Falls, MN (03A)

"I have interstitial cystitis and the only drug that helps my bladder pain is Elmiron. However, it costs \$800 a month. The manufacturer covers it for me for 11 months of the year, but I most definitely don't have \$800 laying around for the one month. I save for months in order to afford it. Last year, I had to have a GoFundMe because I received no assistance at all. I worry every day whether I'll be able to afford Elmiron, and if it will be covered next year at all."

Barbara B. of Faribault, MN (24B)

"My name is Barbara and I am a 72-year-old wife and mother who deals with the daily pain of COPD, osteoarthritis, and fibromyalgia. Along with the physical pain, I often face financial pain because of the high cost of my inhalers. My Trelegy Ellipta inhaler costs \$353 before I hit the deductible and I live on a fixed income. I just cannot afford that. I have to ration or skip taking my inhaler when I need it, which makes it hard to breathe. I want to be able to see my family grow even more. I have 8 kids, 19 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren... I am still young and would love to see my family grow even larger."

Yvonne C. of Oronoco, MN (25A)

"I suffer from blood clotting. My doctor recommended and prescribed my Eliquis. But when I went to pick up a prescription, I was told the copay would be \$430. It's now changed to \$470, after Medicare drug coverage and supplemental Blue Cross. I pay it out of my monthly budget. It takes a huge toll. I just have to tighten my budget and cut out anything that brings me joy. I really hope the cost comes down, as I have other medications and it all adds up."

Deanna R. of Rochester, MN (23A)

"About 10 months ago I started taking an oral chemo drug for my leukemia. My doctor helped me join in with a special pharmacy which will sometimes help folks like me. They have been helping so far, and the drug seems to be helping a great deal. I started out with 3 pills a day, which cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a month. Because of illness, I was taken down to one a day for a few months. I am now taking 2 a day with the possibility of moving up to 3 again, when my hematologist decides. I noticed the cost for 2 at this time is getting close to \$8,000 per month. There is no guarantee on how long the special pharmacy will be able to continue to help."

David U. of Saint Paul, MN (57B)

"I recently had a Pulmonary Embolism. I had very few symptoms and very little lung damage. However, I have been prescribed blood thinners to hopefully prevent another blood clot from forming in the future. Both Xarelto and Eliquis will cost me around \$300 per month which is a classic case of price fixing. I am retired and living on Social Security so I object to paying this much for medications which means I will have to skimp on or give up something else."

MinnesotaCare Public Option

Fact Sheet

Everyone deserves affordable, quality healthcare.

Across race, income, and zip code every person deserves access to healthcare, no exception. We know that our families, economy, and local communities are stronger when we all have access to truly affordable, high-quality healthcare that supports our health and wellbeing. It's time to pass a MinnesotaCare Public Option this session to allow more Minnesotans access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare.

What is MinnesotaCare?

Established in 1992 with bipartisan leadership, MinnesotaCare is a public healthcare program for low-income working individuals. It is funded through state, federal, and enrollee contributions.

The MinnesotaCare Public Option proposal would:

- Expand access to affordable healthcare by allowing middle-income Minnesotans struggling to afford high deductible plans on the individual market to buy-in to MinnesotaCare.
- Expand eligibility to include undocumented Minnesotans currently excluded from Minnesota Health Care Programs.
- Offer temporary assistance to help individuals and small businesses afford healthcare while the buy-in is being implemented.
- Create a path toward alternative care delivery systems that will work with providers to improve health outcomes, health equity, and access while maintaining affordability for the state and enrollees.

The MinnesotaCare Public Option has strong support.

Since its introduction in 2016, a MinnesotaCare Public Option has had strong support from across the state. Supporters include: family farmers, small business owners, artists, entrepreneurs, retired Minnesotans who do not yet qualify for Medicare, labor unions, community organizations, health equity groups, and healthcare professionals.

Health equity requires action.

Our health and wellbeing is interconnected. Minnesota has explicit health equity goals, yet state law excludes undocumented immigrant community members, many of whom are people of color and essential workers, from accessing Minnesota Health Care Programs and high-deductible insurance plans cut many Minnesotans from getting the care they need. This proposal takes critical action to ensure our public healthcare system and the public option leaves nobody out.

91 percent of Minnesotans surveyed believe the government should expand insurance options so that everyone can afford quality care

Healthcare Value Hub Survey, Nov. 2020

Minnesotans for a MinnesotaCare Public Option

Luke Breen, Minneapolis, MN

“For nearly 30 years, my wife and I have owned Perennial Cycle. As small business owners, we deal with big and small challenges everyday. Healthcare is one of the challenges that is just too big for a small business like ours to overcome. Our deductibles are in the range of \$10,000 to \$14,000 per year. Like many other small businesses, we cannot keep great employees who age off their parent’s insurance. We would love to be able to offer health insurance to our employees and to have an affordable option for our family. A Minnesota Public Option that includes coverage for small businesses would be life-changing for entrepreneurs and employees who need and deserve affordable, quality healthcare.”

Danny Lundell, Cannon Falls, MN

“As a building contractor and a farmer, I have been self-employed since 1984. Decades ago, health insurance options were hard to find but affordable. However, every year premiums and deductibles keep getting higher. It is unreasonable to expect a family like ours to be able to afford \$20,000 in deductibles on top of our monthly premiums. Construction and farming are dangerous industries which has meant that my wife, like many others, has had to take off-farm work for health insurance. We are lucky to be in good health but rural Minnesotans need and deserve access to good quality, affordable healthcare. A MinnesotaCare Public Option is needed now for families like mine, and the next generation of family farmers who want to live and work in rural communities.”

Maria Maldonado, St. Cloud, MN

“I have lived in Saint Cloud for 21 years. In August 2022, a vein in my left foot broke and since I don't have medical insurance, I was treating it at home. I am worried because the wound keeps reopening and my foot has not fully healed yet. On February 1, I went to see a doctor and asked if they could refer me to a specialist. The doctor said it was necessary, but I need health insurance to be able to attend that appointment since it is very expensive. I am also diabetic. I am afraid that the wound will get infected. I do not want to lose my foot, because it would affect my ability to work and I need to provide the support my family needs, but without medical insurance, I cannot attend my medical appointments regularly. Please pass this legislation and include immigrants in MinnesotaCare.”

Jeremy Messersmith, Minneapolis, MN

Making art is fun--making art as a living is a challenge. As a self-employed singer/songwriter, I pay between \$7,000-\$10,000 per year in healthcare costs. I've had countless conversations with fellow artists who have been forced to curtail or abandon their pursuits, not because of a lack of financial viability but because they could not afford healthcare for themselves and their families. Minnesota has a history of supporting the arts and culturally. Creating a MinnesotaCare Public Option is one of the best ways we can support the arts and artists across our state.”

Paula Williams, Barnum, MN

“Our family spends 20% of our income on healthcare. As a Type 1 diabetic I have necessary equipment and supplies, beyond my insulin, that cost thousands of dollars a year. My insurance company doesn't pay for any of my care until I've paid down my deductible, and even then I end up paying all of my \$6,200 out-of-pocket maximum every year. My spouse's chronic condition also requires that she pay her full out of pocket maximum as well. We buy our insurance on the individual market. We don't have any other choice. Our premiums, even on a Silver Plan, are over \$1,400 a month. Luckily for us, we receive a federal subsidy of over \$1,300 a month in the form of an Advanced Premium Tax Credit to pay for those premiums. Surely, Minnesota could use those federal dollars toward a MinnesotaCare Public Option that would offer families like mine a better choice, rather than subsidizing health insurance companies.”