Dear Governor Dayton,

As an alliance of organizations who care deeply about the well-being of all Minnesotans, we are seriously troubled by the supplemental budget bill’s proposal to cut funding for programs that increase access to healthy, locally grown foods. **We urge you to oppose cuts to Farm to School and Early Care, the Good Food Access Program and Urban Agriculture in the final supplemental budget bill.**

Children who depend on school and early care meals for daily nutrition deserve fresh healthy food. Schools and Early Care Environments that want to purchase from local farmers often don’t have kitchen equipment to cook farm fresh ingredients, such as whole produce, dairy and raw meat products. Farm to School and Early Care addresses this problem by providing crucial monetary support to food service staff for kitchen equipment to cook farm fresh food. It also supports food service staff in the research and planning necessary to start a new Farm to School or Early Care initiative. The program has already made a crucial impact by expanding the amount and variety of locally produced foods purchased from local farmers. Farm to School is good for farmers, good for kids and good for communities.

Access to healthy foods is a challenge affecting individuals of all ages and in every corner of our state. More than 340,000 Minnesotans face distance and income as barriers to obtaining healthy, affordable food. The Good Food Access Program helps solve this problem by helping to establish and maintain facilities for the sale of healthy, affordable food in areas of the state where better access is needed. The Good Food Access Program also provides an opportunity to advance economic development in communities that need it most by supporting food enterprises that create jobs for community members and create new markets for locally grown foods. The program has already made a crucial impact, but with demand consistently exceeding resources available, we know there is far more work to be done.

Urban Agriculture is a unique and vital source of nourishment and livelihood for those living in Minnesota’s urban populations. The program supports urban agricultural education and community development with an emphasis on youth. It works toward ending the cycle of inter-generational health disparities by increasing food access, facilitating a space for nutrition education, and providing a gateway for youth to explore a career in farming. Over 52% of Minnesota farmers are currently over the age of 55. With a weaning and aging population of farmers in this state, the Urban Agriculture Grant is crucial to the viability of Minnesota’s economy and culture of health.

Simply put, these programs are making healthy, affordable food choices possible for communities that currently lack access, thereby giving Minnesotans in all regions of the state the tools they need to help improve their well-being. In addition, they boost local economies by supporting farmers and small businesses in communities that need it most.

We strongly encourage you to oppose cuts to Farm to School and Early Care, the Good Food Access Program and Urban Agriculture in the final supplemental budget bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Organizational supporters (list provided on back)

For more information, please contact

Leah Gardner—Good Food Access Campaign Manager, 952-278-7918, leah.gardner@heart.org
Organizations

Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics
African American Leadership Forum
AGAPE Child Development Center
Allina Health
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
Appetite For Change, Inc.
Backyard Fungi
Bemidji Community Food Shelf
Bemidji, ISD #31
Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc
Blue Cross and Blue Sheild of Minnesota
Blue Zones Project Albert Lea
CentraCare Health
Children's Minnesota
City of Minneapolis
Community Stabilization Project
Dream of Wild Health
Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation
elevatE
Environmental Justice Community Council
Faith to the Nations
Feeling Good MN
Frogtown Farm
Green Garden Bakery
Growing Home (Olmsted)
Growing North Minneapolis
Highland Park Montessori School
Hmong American Farmers Association
Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council
Hopkins Public Schools - Student Nutrition Dept.
Hunger Solutions Minnesota
Indigenous Environmental Network
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Minneapolis
Just Food and Water
L.I.F.E.1 Partners In Progress,Inc.
Land Stewardship Project
Manna Food Pantry, Inc.
MAZON Advocacy Project: Minnesota
Midwest Food Connection
Mille Lace Early Education
Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
Minnesota School Nutrition Association
National Council of Jewish Women Minnesota
New Horizon Academy
Northside Fresh
Northside Greenway Now!
Open Arms of Minnesota
Open Cities Health Center
PRISM
Project Sweetie Pie
Real Food, Inc.
Renewing the Countryside
St. Paul - Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission
Shared Ground Farmers' Cooperative
SLP SEEDS
St Louis County Commissioner
St. Anthony Park Community Council
TCCAP Head Start
The Food Group
The Good Acre
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.
Ugly Food of the North
Umoja Community Development Corp.
Wabasha Farmers Market
West Central Minnesota Communities Action
White Bear Area Emergency Food Shelf