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2023 Farm to School and Early Care Bill Continues Positive Momentum in Minnesota*Introduced today, House Bill H.F. 2043 lays foundation to meet demand for Farm to School initiatives*

St. Paul, Minnesota—The Minnesota House Agriculture Committee will have a hearing today for Representative Kristi Pursell’s Farm to School and Early Care bill (H.F. 2043), with bipartisan support representing a step forward in supporting local food, schools and economies throughout Minnesota. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the Land Stewardship Program (LSP) support the passage of the bill, which will expand the impact of Farm to School and Early Care initiatives in the state.

IATP and University of Minnesota Extension’s [recent evaluation report](#) on the first round of this grant found that every dollar spent by schools through the program generated an additional dollar of impact in local economic activity and supported access to stable, sustainable markets for local farmers. To increase the impact of these initiatives, the Farm to School and Early Care Bill calls for: programming support (\$5 million for local schools and early cares facilities to purchase locally grown and raised foods); evaluation support (to measure impacts and opportunities for improvement); and regional local food coordinators (establishing community-based regional positions to support Farm to School and Early Care and other new market connections, ensuring emerging farmers can access key markets).

“I am thrilled to champion this bill that will support many farmers in my district and around the state to access new markets for their locally-grown and raised food,” said Pursell. “As a parent, I have seen firsthand the excitement my kids felt around their Farm to School meals. Every child in Minnesota deserves to have access to fresh, healthy food.”

“This program is one that aligns with my farm’s values of supporting our communities and providing healthy food to Minnesotans,” said Ben Doherty of Open Hands Farm in Northfield, Minn. “Increasing funds for this important program, which is a critical market for my farm, would allow more school districts to successfully use an abundance of Minnesota grown food, be a sustainable market for more growers and make a tangible impact for many farms like mine.”

“The work I have done coordinating with farmers in our area to participate in our Farm to School program and provide healthy food for our students has been incredible,” said Aimee Haag, Farm to School liaison for the Minnesota communities of Hutchinson, Litchfield and Dassel-Cokato. “Having coordinators across the state that can be a point person for farmers and connecting them to new markets, whether that be schools or other institutions, could revolutionize how we support our local food economy.”

The hearing in the House is scheduled for Wednesday, March 1, at 6 p.m. CT; the hearing in the Senate will follow in the coming weeks.

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The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy: Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C. and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. To learn more, visit: www.iatp.org.

Land Stewardship Project: The Minnesota-based Land Stewardship Project (LSP) is a private, nonprofit, membership-based organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop healthy communities. LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. To learn more, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org.