



6 February, 2024

Scott Thellman
President, Juniper Hill Farms LLC

Chairman Rahjes and Members of the Committee:

My name is Scott Thellman. I'm a first generation farmer and local food distributor, and the owner of a variety of agricultural enterprises in Lawrence, Kansas. I am here today to voice my strong support for the appropriation of \$1 Million dollars in the FY2025 State Budget for the Kansas Farm-to-Food Bank program.

As a KDA approved LFPA vendor in 2023, who grew, aggregated and delivered over 15,000 cases of Kansas grown produce to the Harvesters Food Bank and the Kansas Food Bank, I feel that I can speak to the vital importance of programs like this on our state's food system system as a whole – both in supporting the growth and creation of new agricultural markets for our State's producers while also supporting the health and wellbeing of our State's most vulnerable populations.

Some of the program highlights from our 2023 participation in the LFPA include:

- Delivery of 3,537 cases of organically grown foods and 1,956 cases of conventional raised foods from our operation being delivered to food banks across the State, including: Beets, tomatoes, summer and winter squash, leafy greens, cabbages, peppers, and other crops.
- Aggregation and delivery of 9,616 cases and bins of produce from 8 growers across the State, allowing our operation to maximize the use of our cold storage, refrigerated trucks, and cold chain distribution capacities for the benefit of our operation and growers across the state, including. These growers included both small scale beginning and established larger scale specialty crop producers, providing them both with additional access to marketing outlets..
- Development and formation of new relationships with the larger food bank network across the state of Kansas, increasing our farm's donated produce not associated with this program by over 30,000 lbs.

The Kansas Farm-To-Food Bank program is more than just a line item and state funding program; it is an investment in and testament to our state's continued commitment to fostering and growing a sustainable and robust local food system that benefits all stakeholders, from farmers to families both urban to rural. By purchasing locally grown foods, this program not only provides fresh and nutritious foods for distribution through already well established food distribution networks within our State's food banks but also stimulates rural economies and communities by keeping funds within our State and supporting Kansas farmers.

The positive impacts of this program extend well beyond economic stimulation and nutritional support – this program helps to provide new opportunities for producers to invest in and grow their operations, increase their growing capacities, and ultimately scale their operations to enter into new larger volume markets across the region – all while reducing and minimizing food loss.

When you invest in a Kansas Farmer, you are investing in not only their operations but also their communities and our state. Programs like this have ripple effects across the state's economy, and pay dividends on the investment made. Your support of this program is imperative to future growth opportunities within our state's food system, and I hope that with your support of this program it can continue to be the catalyst of investment and growth for our state's producers and communities as we all work together to Build a Better Food System.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Thellman', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Scott Thellman, President
Juniper Hill Farms
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