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Representative Liz Olson, Chair
Minnesota House Ways and Means Committee

Re: HF 3763 (Vang) – Agriculture Supplemental Budget Bill – Support for AFREC Renewal

The Minnesota Crop Production Retailers represents the statewide network of co-ops and ag retailers who work with farmers and producers to provide seeds, plant health, and plant protection inputs. MCPR members are the trusted crop advisors and agronomists who assist farmers with crop planning and nutrient management.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed sunset of the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC) and the redirection of the \$0.40 per ton fertilizer fees to fund a new program. This move could disrupt the crucial research and educational activities currently supported by AFREC. We are concerned that sunsetting this valuable program and ending the peer-reviewed research would limit progress on developing and sharing innovations in farming practices.

MCPR is firmly in favor of renewing AFREC, advocating for extending the council's sunset date for ten (10) years and maintaining the associated funding as recommended by the AFREC Council. The research supported by AFREC has led to advancements in fertilizer efficiency, a better understanding of how to deploy cover crops, and strategies to improve soil health and protect water quality.

In light of the recent nitrate concerns, it is important to recognize the role of U of MN research in understanding the relationships between nitrogen fertilizer inputs, environmental losses and yield production. U of MN research consistently reveals that nitrogen losses under recommended rates are frequently no greater than fields getting no nitrogen fertilizer applied yet dramatically increase yields and financial gain. This is a win for farmers, agri-businesses, homeowners, and the local economy. If AFREC is dismantled, most of this critical research will no longer exist. The AFREC research is actively shared with farmers, crop advisors, and agricultural sector stakeholders. For example, the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center (MAWRC) sponsors [the Nutrient Management and Nitrogen Management Conferences](#), where the AFREC Research is shared with the agricultural community.

The current AFREC funding priorities outlined in the [RFP](#) include:

- Long-term research related to sequestering soil carbon, evaluating climate change, and monitoring soil health.
- Short-term research on soil productivity focused on nutrient management, cover crops, and soil health, including methods for measuring soil health.
- Research on the impact of climate change on the nitrogen cycle and fertilizer recommendations.
- Projects that invest in drainage infrastructure systems that allow long-term water quality monitoring as a function of nutrient and soil management practices.
- The request for proposal outlines additional priorities, including research on precision agriculture, irrigation, and updating fertilizer recommendations for secondary crops (e.g., edible beans and sunflowers).

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Lee Helgen, Executive Director, Minnesota Crop Production Retailers