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February 1, 2023

Chair Dave Lislegard
House Tax Committee, Property Tax Division
451 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Lislegard and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our support for Rep. Reyer's bill to fund Soil Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) through a new local government aid program at the MN Department of Revenue (HF735). Stable, long-term funding for SWCDs will help them best assist our family farmer members in meeting their on-farm conservation goals.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. Conserving our soil and water for future generations is central to the long-term sustainability of our members' farms. SWCDs serve as their trusted, local, boots-on-the-ground partners in this important work, providing direct technical assistance, demonstrating new practices, and connecting with state and federal resources. That's why at our annual convention last November our members again voted to adopt a resolution in support of increased, general fund support for SWCDs.

The 2021 drought was the worst since at least the 1980s and that came soon after our wettest fall on record in 2019. In response to these challenges, our members are actively working to adopt new practices that make them more resilient and promote soil health and water quality. Consistent and reliable funding for SWCDs is a foundational step toward helping our members achieve these important goals, benefiting both their individual operations and the entire state.

We appreciate your consideration of HF735 and appreciated this proposal's inclusion in the final tax deal last session. We are eager to see it across the finish line this year. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047. Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farm families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Wertish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union