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Chair Samantha Vang
Vice Chair Kristi Pursell
Representative Paul Anderson
Members, House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee

Dear Chair Vang and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jack Frechette and I am a heritage breed hog farmer in Pine County, Minnesota. My wife and I have run our farm operation for eight years, and have grown to a place where our farm is locally known and respected. In many ways, we have seen as much success as a tiny farm business can hope for.

However, we are limited significantly in our ability to grow and reach a new level of production and profitability by one factor: labor. My wife and I have responsibilities off of the farm, and so our productive farm hours are limited to little more than essential care: feeding, health checks, and occasional rotation of pasture. This leaves a lot left on the table in terms of optimal animal and soil health practices, new projects to expand our operation, etc. These are principles that we work every day to elevate — and yet we are hamstrung by labor hours.

We are in a position to compensate a farm intern, but not nearly to the degree that would allow for the intern to feel stable in their employment. As a former farm intern myself, I know how wrenching it can be to be learning the craft that you passionately want to learn, while anxious about the minuscule paycheck and its ability to cover your most basic expenses. Luckily, I had some savings to fall back on, but too few have such a luxury, and are instead forced to abandon their passion for more gainful employment.

HF 1747 is the best solution that I have come upon to address this very specific and very real need. We have here an opportunity to bypass that omnipresent dilemma in agriculture — income or passion — and unite the two. More individuals will have the chance that I had to learn new skills and allow themselves to dream about how they might use food to serve their communities.

By passing this bill, we allow small farm owners to plan for sensible expansion and development. By passing this bill, we send a message to young people that agriculture is, indeed, a critical aspect of American life and culture, and worthy of study and commitment. Should we miss this opportunity, I fear that the message is a realization of the small farming community's great fear: that government support for what they do is rhetorical and nostalgic, but lacks any kind of real commitment.

Jack Frechette
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