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February 21, 2022

Chair Jamie Becker-Finn
House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
559 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share my support for Representative Fischer's bill to provide fair access to the information and tools needed by farmers to repair their own equipment (HF1156). We also believe the Attorney General is well positioned to enforce provisions in this bill. At present, farmers who experience issues with sensors or other software-controlled systems in their farm equipment have to rely on tools, manuals, and diagnostic equipment available solely through manufacturers and authorized dealers. This can result in costly delays—particularly during harvest—and limits the work of independent repair technicians.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. Delegates elected from our membership approved a resolution in support of digital Right to Repair at our annual meeting. They care about this issue not only because it will have the practical effect of helping them get more timely repairs on their equipment, but also as a matter of principle. They strongly believe that—as an owner of equipment—they have a right to make repairs. In fact, many farms depend on making in-house repairs to better control costs.

It is also important to note that farmers increasingly rely on other digital technology, including cell phones, laptops, and GPS devices to monitor weather conditions, bid on livestock, and manage their risk in a global market for commodities. Many would benefit from the ability to repair this equipment as well.

Our members have a strong interest in maintaining a healthy network of dealerships and repair shops and receive excellent service from their dealership. We believe that there is room for more independent technicians and that the Attorney General can help ensure a fair market for repair.

Thank you for your consideration and to Rep. Fischer for his strong leadership on this issue. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047 (C).

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