



May 9, 2025

Representative Paul H. Anderson, Chair  
Senator Aric Putnam, Chair  
Conference Committee on HF 2446

RE: HF 2446 Conference Committee

Dear Chair Anderson, Chair Putnam, and Conferees,

On behalf of our 31,000 family farm and ranch members, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) appreciates the opportunity to share written testimony with the Conference Committee on HF 2446. Based on MFBF policy set by our statewide grassroots membership, we specifically want to identify support for the following provisions:

House and Senate

- Operating adjustment for the Board of Animal Health
- Additional investment in the Agricultural Emergency Account
- Continued funding for the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program
- Increased appropriations for the wolf and elk depredation/crop damage accounts
- Continued investment for the Agriculture Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) and the following programs housed within AGRI:
  - Biofuels Infrastructure Grant
  - County Fair Grant
  - Farm-to-School and Early Care Programs
  - Livestock Protection Grant
  - Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing Grant
- Strong investment in the Agriculture Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer Program (AGREETT)
- Additional funding for the Farm Business Management (FBM) Program within AGREETT
- Additional support for the Minnesota Agricultural Education and Leadership Council (MAELC)
- Continued aid for county fairs and county agricultural societies
- Continued support for rural mental health resources and farm safety grants
- Continued investment in the Dairy Development and Profitability Enhancement Program

Physical Address: 3080 Eagandale Place, Eagan, MN 55121-2118 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 64370, St. Paul, MN 55164-0370

House only

- Restricted use pesticide handler definition and appropriation
- Olmsted County soil health program study

Senate only

- Beginning Farmer Tax Credit limited liability company language
- Continued funding for the Center for Rural Policy and Development
- New funding for the Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership (MARL) Program

MFBBF appreciates the work of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees to craft a strong, bipartisan agriculture budget. We hope to see the provisions listed above in the final agriculture budget bill. As negotiations progress, if there are any questions from members of the Committee, please reach out to Loren Dauer, Director of Public Policy, at [loren.dauer@fbmn.org](mailto:loren.dauer@fbmn.org) or Hunter Pederson, Public Policy Specialist, at [hunter.pederson@fbmn.org](mailto:hunter.pederson@fbmn.org). Thank you for your support of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Sincerely,



Dan Glessing, President  
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation

Physical Address: 3080 Eagandale Place, Eagan, MN 55121-2118 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 64370, St. Paul, MN 55164-0370

---

Phone: 651.768.2100 Fax: 651.768.2159 Email: [info@fbmn.org](mailto:info@fbmn.org) [www.fbmn.org](http://www.fbmn.org)



305 Roselawn Ave E | Suite 200 | St. Paul, MN 55117  
Phone: (651) 639-1223 | [www.mfu.org](http://www.mfu.org)

April 8, 2025

Chair Aric Putnam  
Co-Chair Paul Anderson  
Co-Chair Rick Hansen  
Conference Committee on Agriculture and Finance  
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Putnam, Co-Chair Anderson, Co-Chair Hansen, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share strong support for provisions in your agriculture finance bills and to highlight priorities for our family farmer members. We are grateful for you and your team's partnership, and we are confident that what emerges from conference will support family farmers, help fill gaps left by the federal government, and build an agriculture economy that is more resilient, distributed, and fair.

Your work on this state budget comes as our members are facing significant headwinds. Traveling the state in late April and early March for a series of 10 listening sessions, we heard firsthand about the impacts of an escalating trade war, cancelled federal contracts, layoffs at local USDA offices, lack of action on a Farm Bill, risk of animal disease, and increasing input costs. All these challenges exacerbate the financial stress experienced by farmers and ranchers going into spring. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, median net farm income dropped to less than \$22,000 last year, the lowest since the 1990s.

The state's budget for agriculture is comparatively small, making up less than half of one percent of our total state budget. That said, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and the Board of Animal Health (BAH) all have a big impact, helping lead our state's agriculture economy through COVID-19, 2021's historic drought, past zoonotic disease outbreaks, and more. Recognizing this—and the fiscal challenges facing the state—we appreciate your work to advocate for a meaningful increase to the agriculture budget. We also **thank you all for prioritizing funding for the agencies to maintain operations, ensure continuity of programs, and continue providing quality service to farmers, ranchers, and others in our state.** We also appreciate that—with exceptions—base funded programs are largely held harmless.

Beyond that, we would like to share our support for:

- **Expanding access to local and regional markets** including by:
  - **Increasing support for Farm to School and Early Care** (House 10.19; Senate 9.4) to help farmers access new markets and ensure young people have access to healthy, nutritious meals that aid their learning. This program has been a success for participating farmers, schools, and the state.

- **Creating a state Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program** (House 16.4; Senate 17.12) to help organizations establish wholesale agreements with farmers, providing a stable market to those who are working to build their farm businesses. For many new and emerging farmers, accessing a reliable market can provide much-needed financial stability during the high-risk early years of farming. Even beyond that—and much like farm to school efforts—this program is a win-win for communities, improving access to fresh healthy food for people who need it.

We appreciate that both bills are aligned in prioritizing these proposals, particularly in the face of cancelled federal funding. We hope that a joint target accommodates funding at the higher level advanced by the House.

- **Expanding local and regional processing** is an important way we can help family farmers add value to their products locally, promote rural economic development, and ensure that farmers can earn a fair price for what they produce. That's why this work has been a top priority for our organization in recent years. We support:
  - **New increased funding for state meat and poultry inspectors** (House 4.12; Senate 5.1) to ensure that new processors seeking inspection can count on that critical service from the state. This investment is timely as a significant portion of our state meat inspection program is funded by the federal government, which has signaled intent to scale back their share of the cost. Without inspection, farmers are unable market their meat or poultry through retailers, restaurants, or other means, limiting their markets and opportunities for profit.
  - **Continued support for livestock processing and value-added grants through AGRI** (House 10.13; Senate 8.34), which supports meat, poultry, dairy and other processors in starting up, expanding, or modernizing their facilities. This will help them serve more farmers, directly addressing the bottleneck experienced by our members across the state. Upgrading facilities will also ensure that these businesses are modernized, aiding in the transition to the next generation. Should there be the opportunity, we support additional resources for meat processing, particularly given cuts to programs at the federal level. We also appreciate that where you propose adding programs to AGRI, the total funding for the program (7.20) is also increased so as not to displace programs—like value-added grants—that rely on undesignated funding. We support the higher funding level advanced by the Senate.

- **Supporting new and emerging farmers** and helping the next generation of farmers build a life in agriculture. We believe strongly that this is not only an investment in those individual farms, but also the continued vitality of our rural communities. More specifically, we support:
  - **New funding for Farm Business Management (FBM) scholarships and support** (House 19.11; Senate 19.27) which will help new farmers and others weather financial challenges and ensure their farms are viable long-term. We're also glad that FBM has continued to prioritize farmland transition and supporting all farms with one-on-one financial assistance. In the House, we appreciate the strong increase starting in 2028 and would welcome opportunities to move that up to this coming year as is done with the smaller increase in the Senate. We believe that demand for the program will be high given the financial challenges facing farmers this coming year.
  - **The Emerging Farmers Office** (House 15.6; Senate 16.17) ensuring that MDA will continue to implement the important work spearheaded by the Emerging Farmers Working Group making the department's programs are equitable, accessible, and responsive to the unique needs of emerging farmers.
  - **Down Payment Assistance** (House 13.18; Senate 13.18) which is a direct way the state helps get new farmers on the land. Land access is a central challenge for new farmers and it's also how they gain security and build generational wealth. We're glad to see the House build on the investment in this program. And we also support increasing the max for an individual award (House 33.25) and would encourage the committee to consider extending awards so that farmers who utilize the program have time to identify a qualifying purchase of farmland before their award expires.
  - **Farmland transition support** (House 15.24; Senate 16.35) through the continuation Farm Advocate program. Farm transitions which can be costly and complicated for both parties, and this will help get more new farmers started.
- **Farm Safety and Rural Mental Health** (House 7.13; Senate 5.24), supporting outreach and counseling services and ensuring that MDA can continue their nation-leading work to support farmers experiencing crisis. Farming can be stressful, and the financial uncertainty of the coming growing season will only add to that stress. This appropriation compliments other investments in mental health and safety by enabling MDA to operate the Farm and Rural Helpline, coordinate the Farm Safety Working Group, and other important initiatives. We're also grateful to see continued support for statewide mental health counselors, supported through an appropriation to Region Five Development Commission (House 14.29; Senate 15.33).
- **Farm Advocates** (House 15.20; Senate 16.31) to help expand their work to support farmers experiencing financial hardship. While the department's work on rural mental health supports farmers, the advocates help the farm finances.

- **Zoonotic disease preparedness**, including through direct investments in the Board of Animal Health (BAH) is critical for helping our state prepare for a renewed bout of HPAI, H5N1, and other animal diseases that pose a significant threat to our state's livestock farmers. We support:
  - **New funding for the Ag Emergency Account** (House 17.26; Senate 20.29), ensuring that the state is well-prepared to quickly respond in the face of an outbreak this spring.
  - **Protect grants** (House 12.8; Senate 38.30) to help poultry producers install technology to limit interactions with wild birds and prevent the transmission of avian influenza. This is an important and comparatively cost-effective method the state can help mitigate risk of devastating outbreaks.
- **Cooperative Development Grants** (House 11.11; Senate 10.8) – continuing this successful program helps our members and others build and scale cooperatives that add value to MN-grown products, improve profitability, and keep money in rural communities. In the face of market concentration and an escalating trade war, many of our members are seeking new ways to process, market, and otherwise add value to products they produce. Helping new cooperatives get started will shorten supply chains and make our food system more resilient. We prefer the original language advanced by the House, without the “up to” added in the Senate (10.8).
- **Livestock investment grant changes** (Senate 49.8) to help more livestock producers upgrade and improve their farm infrastructure. Helping livestock producers make update their operations and make them more resilient is good for main street businesses, the health of soil, and the vitality of our rural communities. This past November, delegates to our annual convention adopted new policy supporting an update to the grant program.

We support the language put forward by the Governor to increase the reimbursement amount to 50 percent for the first \$20,000. This will help beginning farmers and those adding livestock to their operations by allowing them to get more meaningful cost share on installing watering systems, building fences, or adding shelter for grazing animals. Importantly, the Governor's proposal maintains equity for larger projects by ensuring that projects above that threshold still get the increased reimbursement on their first \$20,000.

- **Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants** (House 2.22; Senate 2.33) – continued strong funding for this successful program will help more farmers get started with practices that make farmland more resilient to extreme weather events, retain topsoil, build organic matter, and promote water quality. We appreciate that this program is flexible and allows farmers to lead in pursuing innovations that make sense for their operation and geography. We support the higher base funding amount as carried by the Senate.
- **Funding Forever Green** (House 22.18; Senate 28.20) – continued investment in the development of perennial and winter annual crops will help our family farmer members add value and diversity to their farming operations, deliver important ecosystem benefits, and remain resilient in the face of climate change. On the other hand, this proposal does not renew funding for market development and commercialization, which we also feel is an important strategic next step in developing new cropping systems in a way that supports small businesses, increases adoption, and ensures a fair price for farmers.

- **Wildlife depredation funding** (House 3.3; Senate 3.15) to support farmers and ranchers who've lost livestock to wolves, or crops and infrastructure to elk. Farmers losing livestock to wolves carries a financial and emotional toll. These programs help compensate producers and limit the financial loss. Going forward, we also support the committee considering continued investment in wolf-livestock prevention grants, which help mitigate conflicts before they happen.
- **Biofuels infrastructure grants** (House 9.8; Senate 7.28) to expand the use of higher-octane, cleaner-burning biofuels through upgrading the infrastructure at fuel retailers across the state. This improves consumer access to higher blends, lower prices at the pump, and lower the emissions from existing vehicles, all while bolstering an important market for many family farmers.
- **County fair support** (House 8.30; Senate 7.15) to help promote agriculture, enhance arts access and education, and preserve and promote our state's history and cultural heritage.
- **Noxious weeds funding** (House 4.18) to help with detection, control, and management. This is a threat to producers' livelihoods, and we support Minnesota's continued support to county ag inspectors.

Last but not least, we strongly support your committee's consistent **investment in our state's work on rural broadband**. Strong and consistent funding will help us make sorely needed progress toward ensuring that every Minnesotan can access quality, high-speed internet. Family farmers rely on the internet to connect with customers, monitor market trends, educate themselves on the latest farming methods, and make use of modern farming technology—it's increasingly essential to running a farm business and supporting a family in rural Minnesota.

We realize that the state is facing broader fiscal challenges and even provided that you secure a positive joint target akin to the House's, we understand that crafting a bill requires difficult choices between worthy priorities. With that in mind, we'd like to share our concern about omissions or cuts in your budget that we hope can be addressed going forward. These include:

- **Making AGRI a dedicated account** to ensure that funding allocated to this flagship program stays in AGRI. This structural change would grant MDA flexibility and—in effect—make more money available to Farm to School and Early Care, biofuels infrastructure Grants, Farm Business Management scholarships, and so much more. Also important at a time when farmers are facing incredible uncertainty, this change would ensure that AGRI has more undesignated funds to quickly respond to challenges as they have with COVID-19, 2021's historic drought, and recent outbreaks of HPAI. We appreciate your consideration of making AGRI a dedicated account.

- **Cut to the Green Fertilizer Grant program** (House 20.26; 21.2) – we appreciate the legislature establishing this program in 2023 and hope it is not cut in a final budget. This nation-leading pilot program not only invests in green fertilizer production, but also incentivizes farmer ownership of production facilities through Minnesota’s existing network of farmer-owned cooperatives. There are many benefits to building this industry in our state, including lowering the carbon intensity growing crops, increasing economic resilience for farmers and rural communities, and creating a stable market for green hydrogen that can then be scaled and deployed to green manufacturing and mining. That said, projects are hugely capital intensive and early investment from the state will could prove consequential for getting distributed, farmer-owned production capacity online soon. Particularly given uncertainty on the federal level, we hope the state can find ways to expand this program going forward.
- **Cuts to the DAIRI Program** (House 20.29; Senate 21.5) – this program was created in 2023 to help small and mid-sized dairies access federal risk protection, manage increasing input costs, and weather market volatility. Unfortunately, lack of action on an updated Farm Bill has meant that this money has gone unspent. While have concerns about this cut, we appreciate that the committee has prioritized funding for other challenges facing dairy farmers, including the renewed threat of H5N1, helping upgrade First District, and continuing support for value-added grants.

In all, we are confident that you will agree to a strong bill and we’re eager to move a conference agreement quickly and before May 19. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at [stu@mfu.org](mailto:stu@mfu.org) or (320) 232-2047 (C). Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota’s farm families.

Sincerely,



Gary Wertish  
President, Minnesota Farmers Union





May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chair Aric Putnam  
Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and  
Rural Development Committee

Co-Chairs Paul Anderson and Rick Hansen  
House Agriculture Finance and Policy  
Committee

Dear Chairs Putnam, Anderson and Hansen and members of the conference committee,

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) appreciates the opportunity to voice our support on specific provisions included in the omnibus agriculture and broadband finance bill. MCGA represents nearly 7,000 dues-paying family farmer members and all of Minnesota's 24,000 corn farmers who contribute to the corn checkoff program for research and education activities.

MCGA strongly supports the following provisions in the Agriculture Appropriations side-by-side:

Continued funding for the Biofuels Financial Assistance Program (Page R8)

We appreciate both the House and Senate for including funding for this program. The Biofuels Infrastructure Grant Program was established by the Legislature in 2021. In the first three years of the program MDA awarded a total of 60 grants totaling \$9.5 million with grantees contributing an estimated \$11.6 million in matching funds once the projects are completed. The program provides grants up to \$199,000 to fuel retailers to upgrade their equipment and begin offering mid and higher-level blends of biofuels including E15, a fuel blend containing 15 percent ethanol.

E15, often marketed as Unleaded 88, is approved for use in all vehicles 2001 and newer and offers higher octane at a lower price without sacrificing gas mileage. Unleaded 88 also cuts GHG emissions by about 2.5 percent compared to regular E10 gasoline and nearly 7.5 percent compared to gasoline without any ethanol added. In 2024, Minnesota surpassed 500 stations offering Unleaded 88 with record sales of over 140 million gallons sold. But with over 2,000 fuel stations in Minnesota, there is still room to grow. Additionally, in 2024 Unleaded 88 saved consumers over \$25 million at the pump compared to regular 87.

Continued Funding for the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (Page R2)

We appreciate both the House and Senate funding the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program and the Senate for funding it at the full base amount. In 2022, a first of its kind grant program was authorized as a pilot at the MN Department of Agriculture to offer grants to farmers to purchase equipment to aid in soil health practice adoption. In the past as Minnesota farmers have worked to implement practices on their farms they have utilized federal and state cost-share programs. While cost-share programs and programs that allow farmers to rent equipment were helpful for early adopters, it is our stance that programs that encourage ownership of equipment are more durable in the long-term for soil health practice adoptions and is the best path forward for widespread adoption of soil health practices across the state. The Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant Program does that by providing down payment assistance on equipment.

Since the pilot program was passed in 2022, the response to the program by Minnesota farmers has been overwhelming with over \$24,500,000 in requests compared to the \$5,250,000 that has been made available through general and clean water funds. In the 3 years that the grant program has existed, it has had an impact on over 320,000 acres.

In addition, MCGA also supports the following Provisions:

- Agriculture, Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer -AGREETT (Page R22)
- Mental health and farm safety outreach and support (Page R6)
- Restricted Use Pesticide Plan Update (Page R6, House Side)

We look forward to working with the conference committee as they move forward. If you or your staff have any questions, please feel free to reach out to MCGA's Public Policy Manager, Alex Trunnell at [atrunnell@mncorn.org](mailto:atrunnell@mncorn.org) or 952-460-3612. We are always happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Kanten".

Jim Kanten  
President  
Minnesota Corn Growers Association

Representative Paul Anderson  
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar St.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Aric Putnam  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
3215 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Avenue West  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Rick Hansen  
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar St.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155  
May 8, 2025

RE: Omnibus Agriculture Policy & Appropriations Bill – HF2446

May 8, 2025

Dear Chairs Anderson, Hansen, Putnam, and members of the Conference Committee:

As the Conference Committee works toward a joint agriculture omnibus bill, we write to share considerations about how proposals included or omitted in your respective versions of the bill impact people and nature, and the state's ability to address the challenges facing Minnesota's climate and biodiversity.

First, we want to highlight investments that appear in both the House and Senate versions of the bill and that we strongly support including in a final agreement:

- **Soil Health Financial Assistance Program** (*Appropriations side-by-side R2*): While the House includes \$638,000 for this program and the Senate has proposed \$1.228m, we are pleased to see continued investment in this high-demand opportunity as proposed in HF985 (Nelson)/SF882 (Gustafson) and hope a robust appropriation will be made for this banner program.
- **Local Food Purchasing Assistance Grant Program** (*Appropriations side-by-side page R18*): Since the House and Senate have different appropriations, \$2 million in the House language and \$500,000 in the Senate language, we encourage the conference committee to advance a meaningful appropriation to the program which supports a breadth of specialty crops and diversified crop rotations that are good for soil health while also benefitting local economies.

Second, we write to highlight an investment that appears in the House version of the bill, and urge the committee to incorporate an appropriation for this program in the final agreement:

- **Olmsted County Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative Evaluation,** (*Appropriations side-by-side page 5*), House only. While the House proposal does not expand the program outside of Olmsted County as was proposed in HF2916 (Smith)/SF2845 (Baldon), we appreciate the interest and commitment to a closer look at this successful, comprehensive and cost-effective program so it might be able to expand in the future to enhance groundwater quality, strengthen soil health, and support farmers.

We appreciate the committee's further consideration of these investments. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of nature in Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Pinkalla  
Government Relations Director  
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota



Mariana Martins Carvalho  
Capitol Pathways Intern  
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota



Angelica Day  
Government Relations Specialist  
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota



May 8, 2025

Agriculture Conference Committee Members,

As you finalize the Agriculture budget **we urge you to continue funding for nitrate private well mitigation.** A year and a half ago, the EPA told Minnesota to accelerate its public health response to groundwater nitrate contamination in the vulnerable karst region in SE Minnesota. Since then, there has been significant discussion at the Capitol on how to address this problem. The solution will require both immediate public health measures and long-term nitrogen source reduction.

**HF 821/SF1183 was heard in both the Senate and House Ag committees and is a bipartisan effort to provide clean drinking water to private well owners at greatest risk. Thank you Rep. Jacob, Rep. Anderson, Rep. Pursell, Rep. Vang, Sen. Gustafson, Sen. Putnam, Sen. Miller, and Sen. Nelson for authoring this important appropriation.**

#### Recent Updates

- To date, there have been over 1,400 requests for free well test kits from Southeastern Minnesota residents (goal is 3,600 well tests per year, which is about 10% of the private well owners in the region).
- Of the 236 well test kit results that have come back so far, **11% are above the MCL of 10 mg/L nitrate which has been the federal standard for contamination since 1962.**
- To date, over 160 reverse osmosis systems have been installed in homes with a private well that sampled over 10 mg/L nitrate. This is funded by last session's appropriation of \$2.8M from the Ag committee budget.
- **The money was one-time, meaning there is no permanent fund source for private well mitigation.**

This initiative targets the moment when a family with a private well finds out that the well water they rely on is contaminated above human health limits for nitrate. At that moment, what are their options? This program answers that question, and provides financial support for reverse osmosis home treatment, well repair, and well reconstruction -- with a priority on households with income-base need and for families with small children who are especially vulnerable to nitrate health risks.

With over 9,200 residents in SE Minnesota alone whose well water is at risk, when all the money from last session has been spent, there will still be thousands more who need support. Please continue last year's appropriation from the Ag committee budget for RO home treatment in Southeastern Minnesota.

Ben Olson  
Legislative Director

# Protecting Minnesotans' Drinking Water



## THE PROBLEM

Approximately 1.2 million Minnesotans get their drinking water from private wells. In Southeastern Minnesota, the EPA estimates that 9,200 Minnesotans rely on drinking water from private wells that are at or above the federal health limit for nitrate. **The EPA has issued a mandate to Minnesota to take further actions to safeguard public health in Southeastern Minnesota, with a focus on private well owners.**

Unlike public water systems, which are required to regularly test their water supply and treat it if it nears unsafe contaminant levels, private well owners are largely on their own to protect their drinking water. Consuming nitrate-contaminated drinking water can cause a dangerous blood disorder called methemoglobinemia, and has been linked to an increased risk for certain types of cancer and pregnancy complications. **It's critical that the Legislature continues to act on mitigating nitrate contamination to make sure all Minnesotans have access to clean drinking water.**

## PRIVATE WELL MITIGATION SF1183/HF821

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) supports SF1183/HF821 the Nitrate Private Well Mitigation Appropriation Act, authored by Senator Gustafson (Xiong, Nelson, Putnam, Miller) and Representative Jacob (Anderson P.H., Vang, and Pursell). The bill would invest \$3.866 million per year in private well mitigation in Southeast Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the Governor's Budget Recommendation for last fiscal year, which called for \$4 million for private well mitigation.

For homes with private wells where nitrate levels exceed the federal standard of 10mg/L, the bill would provide funds for:

- reverse osmosis
- well repair
- well reconstruction

The bill prioritizes funds for the most vulnerable populations and those with income-based need.

---

<sup>1</sup> General fund money would be limited to private drinking water wells in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, or Winona County.

## Eligible Counties to receive Private Well Mitigation under SF1183/HF821



### NITRATE CONTAMINATION - A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

In April 2023, MCEA and 10 other organizations filed a petition to the EPA and asked for their help to accelerate Minnesota's response to nitrate-contaminated drinking water in Southeastern Minnesota. Since then, Minnesota has made some notable progress, expanding access to free water quality tests and home water treatment for impacted residences, and strengthening permits for the largest feedlots in the state.

**Legacy Finance Bill:** Clean Water Fund appropriation of \$6 million over the next biennium (\$3 million each year) for a Private Well Initiative that will fund education, outreach, a well inventory and private well testing.

**SF1183/HF 821:** Private Well Mitigation, money for homes with private wells where the water exceeds the federal standard of 10 mg/L. Covers reverse osmosis home treatment, well repair and reconstruction.

Other critical investments from the 2024 legislative session include soil health grants, loan programs for specialized equipment, conservation easements, manure management grants, and a program to monitor nitrate in surface waters.



For more information contact Carly Griffith Ph.D., MCEA Water Program Director,  
[cgriffith@mncenter.org](mailto:cgriffith@mncenter.org)



May 8, 2025

**RE: Comments to the Conference Committee on Agriculture and Broadband Finance (HF2446)**

Dear Chairs and Members of the Conference Committee on Agriculture and Broadband Finance:

The **Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)** is a membership organization representing all of Minnesota's 87 counties. **Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors (MACAI)** is an association of local government professionals who are responsible for enforcement of noxious weed laws, is an affiliate of AMC and adopts platforms consistent with the League of Minnesota Cities and Minnesota Association of Townships as well. Counties are involved in a variety of plant and pest control functions and support the work of state and local entities in this area.

AMC and MACAI appreciate the work and challenges faced by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in assembling your funding proposals. Minnesota is weighing potential future deficits that make this work even more difficult, but you have assembled quality budget recommendations that address important agricultural interests.

**AMC and MACAI appreciate the investment of \$750,000 per year for state support of agricultural inspectors** included in the House language (Page R4, House lines 4.18-4.32). The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Noxious Weed List has grown to 59 prohibited, restricted, and regulated species. These plants are placed on the Noxious Weed List because they may be harmful to public health, the environment, public roads, crops, livestock, or other property. The county ag inspectors work hand in hand with the MDA and other local weed inspectors to identify and manage these plants for public and environmental benefit.

Current funding disparities around the state means that the ability to give these issues proactive attention varies between jurisdictions and that has an impact statewide. We believe this investment will elevate the importance noxious weed management and encourage further local investment, thus establishing more consistent, statewide efforts.

**Thank you for your attention to the many important issues to be addressed in the Agriculture Budget, including support of county agricultural inspector work.** If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Brian Martinson, AMC Policy Analyst, at 651-246-4156 or [bmartinson@mncounties.org](mailto:bmartinson@mncounties.org).

Sincerely,

Brian Martinson, Policy Analyst  
Association of Minnesota Counties

Tyler Luethje, Le Sueur County Parks Director & Ag Inspector  
Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Inspectors, President





DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

May 8, 2025

Dear Chair Putnam, Co-Chair Anderson, and members of the Agriculture Finance Conference Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC), an organization of more than 115 cities located outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to comment on a small portion of the Agriculture Omnibus Finance bills, H.F. 2446, pertaining to the proposed study of PFAS in Biosolids in the House Version at Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2, lines 5.26 – 6.9.

Our cities play a significant role in ensuring Minnesotans have clean water through our wastewater facilities and their biosolids programs. The ability of municipal wastewater treatment facilities to land apply properly managed biosolids is extremely important to our members and the residents of their communities. Our member cities also share this committee's concerns about the health risks associated with per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and we understand the need to assess the potential impact to human health in biosolids.

We are not opposed to the proposed study of the impact of land applied biosolids, though we believe the Committee should consider whether it is duplicative of the Environmental Protection Agency's recently released study on the same topic, which can be found on their website (<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-01/fact-sheet-wwtps-draft-sewage-sludge-risk-assessment-pfoa-pfos.pdf>) as well as efforts already undertaken by other state agencies, such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, on these issues. Moreover, with only \$100,000 provided, we question whether anything beyond a literature review of the subject can be performed. If the study moves forward, we urge that the Conference Committee direct the study to build on existing peer reviewed studies.

Thank you for your consideration.

Elizabeth Wefel  
Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities



May 8, 2025

Agriculture and Broadband Finance  
Conference Committee  
State Capitol Room G3  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Chair Anderson, Alternate Chair Hansen, and members of the Agriculture and Broadband Finance Conference Committee:

The Minnesota Bio-Fuels Association (MBA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on H.F. 2446, the agriculture and broadband development policy and finance bill.

The MBA is the largest non-profit trade association dedicated to representing and supporting renewable fuel producers in the state of Minnesota. Our state produced 1.4 billion gallons of ethanol in 2024, which in turn resulted in \$5.2 billion economic activity and supported 18,434 jobs. The industry also generated \$1.2 billion in income for Minnesota residents and paid \$157.6 million in state and local taxes last year.<sup>1</sup>

As you begin work to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of H.F. 2446, we ask that you support the following priorities:

## **I. AGRI Biofuels Infrastructure Grant Program**

Over the past three years, the Biofuels Infrastructure Grant program has provided 60 grants totaling \$9.5 million with grantees contributing another \$11.6 million in matching funds. Those funds have helped broaden access to higher ethanol blends like E15, a fuel containing 15 percent ethanol that is commonly marketed as “Unleaded 88” due to its higher-octane rating.

Data from the Minnesota Department of Commerce shows that E15 had an average price discount of \$0.17 per gallon in 2024, which saved hard-working Minnesota families \$25 million at the pump last year.

We support the House position with respect to program funding (Subd. 3(f)(3), Line 9.8), and the Senate position on the extension of AGRI appropriations for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 (Section 9, Lines 21.12 through 27.1). We appreciate that both versions included a change recommended in the Governor’s budget to allow eligibility from 10 to 20 dispensing sites, and an extension of AGRI appropriations for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

## **II. AGRI Bioincentive Payments**

The Bioincentive Program provides performance-based payments to producers of advanced biofuels, renewable chemicals, and biomass thermal energy. Many MBA members have expanded or retrofitted their existing capacity to specifically produce “corn kernel fiber” ethanol, which reduces

---

<sup>1</sup> Tuck, Brigid. “Economic contribution of Minnesota’s ethanol industry: 2024”. [UMN Extension CV Report Template](#)



greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent compared to petroleum on a lifecycle basis. This program helps create rural jobs, additional market demand for farmers, and cleaner air for all Minnesotans.

We support the House position with respect to program funding (Subd. 3(f)(2), Line 8.34), and the Senate position on eligibility for participants after April 1, 2023 (Sec. 19, Line 58.8).

A drafting error in the agriculture omnibus bill adopted in 2023 removed the word “advanced” from the program definition of biofuel in the statute. This has created a situation where applications from previously eligible biofuel plants are being denied by the Department of Agriculture because the production cap is being interpreted to apply to overall biofuel production rather than advanced biofuel production. By adding the word “advanced” back into the statute, the original intent of the program will be restored.

### **III. Sustainable Aviation Fuel Definitions**

The Agriculture Committees in both bodies have had robust discussions this year about the importance of providing policy support and tax incentives to spur the development of a Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) supply chain in the state of Minnesota.

While we appreciate that the Senate position modifies the definition of SAF to allow for gaseous carbon oxides (Sec. 20, Lines 59.4 through 59.5 and 59.19 through 59.20), this provision duplicates a provision included in Article 8 of S.F. 2374, the Senate Taxes omnibus bill.

In addition to expanding the resource allocation for the SAF tax credit, extending the tax credit through 2035, and providing a supplemental credit rate for carbon intensity reductions beyond 50 percent, S.F. 2374 would amend the definition of SAF to include gaseous carbon oxides, among other changes.

The MBA was part of a broad stakeholder negotiation on SAF feedstock definitions with state agencies, environmental non-profits, and agriculture and farmer organizations. The resulting compromise was included in S.F. 2374 and disallows foreign feedstock from claiming the tax credit, prevents land use change and enhanced oil recovery, and clarifies hydrogen SAF pathways. We urge your support for that carefully negotiated agreement on SAF definitions in Chapter 41A.

Thank you for your consideration of MBA priorities during conference negotiations.

Sincerely,

Brian Werner  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Bio-Fuels Association



Growth Energy™

Expanding America's Bioeconomy

May 8, 2025

Hon. Paul Anderson  
Chairman  
Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee  
Minnesota State Capitol  
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Chairman Anderson,

Growth Energy is the world's largest association of biofuel producers, representing 97 U.S. plants, including nine in Minnesota, that each year produce 9.5 billion gallons of renewable fuel; 131 businesses associated with the production process; and tens of thousands of biofuel supporters around the country. Together, we are working to bring better and more affordable choices at the fuel pump to consumers, improve air quality, and protect the environment for future generations. We remain committed to helping our country diversify our energy portfolio, grow more green energy jobs, decarbonize our nation's energy mix, sustain family farms, and drive down the costs of transportation fuels for consumers.

Promoting the use of biofuels is an important way Minnesotans can contribute to the state's carbon reduction goals. Bioethanol emits 46% fewer greenhouse gases (GHGs) compared to gasoline.<sup>1</sup> Bioethanol's other environmental benefits are also noteworthy. As has been researched by the University of California, Riverside and the University of Illinois at Chicago, the use of more bioethanol and bioethanol-blended fuel reduces harmful particulates and air toxics such as carbon monoxide, and benzene.<sup>2</sup>

We appreciate the unique challenges Minnesota's retail fuel industry faces when having to replace aging infrastructure. Updating fuel dispensing and storage equipment is not always an easy endeavor. Thankfully, Minnesota has proven itself as a national leader in the promotion and use of biofuels. Since 2021, the state's Biofuels Infrastructure Grant program has awarded 60 grants to fuel retailers, totaling \$9.5 million, to replace infrastructure with equipment capable of storing and dispensing higher bioethanol blends of fuel. The results of these grants have paid off, as recent state data indicates the sale of E15, a fuel containing 15% ethanol also branded as Unleaded 88, hit a record high in 2024.<sup>3</sup>

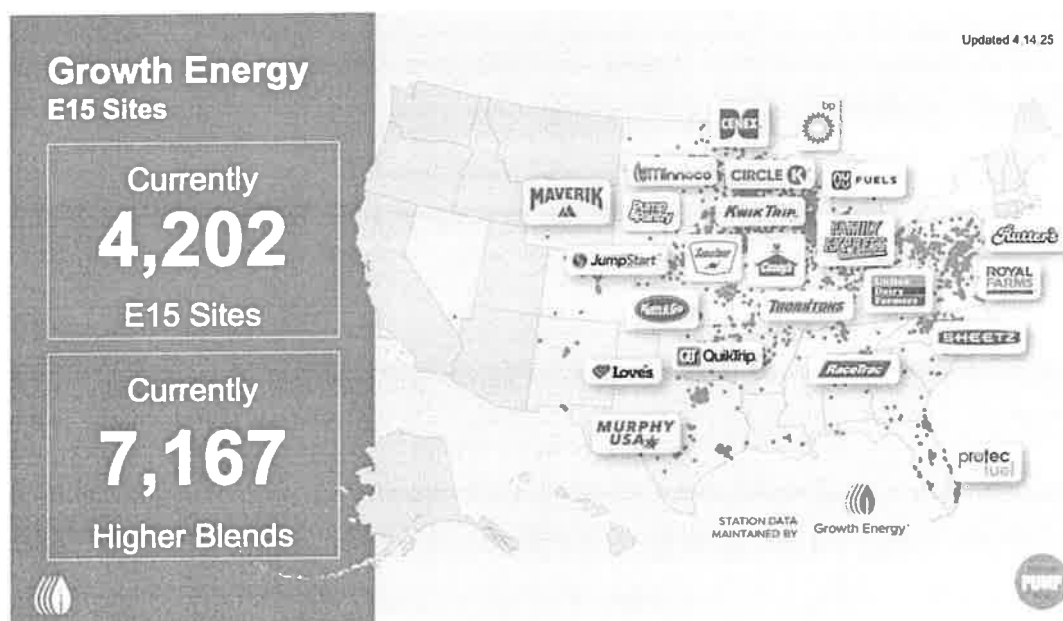
---

<sup>1</sup> <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abdc08>

<sup>2</sup> [Comparison of Exhaust Emissions Between E10 CaRFG and Splash Blended E15](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://mnbiofuels.org/unleaded-88-sales-in-mn-reach-new-record-in-2024>

While these gains are laudable, there is still more to be done. While the Energy Information Administration's latest data (2022) shows the state's retail fuel location count for gasoline at 2,064 sites<sup>4</sup>, less than one quarter of them offer Unleaded 88 E15 gasoline according to GetBiofuel.com. Increasing the number of retail fuel locations offering E15 is essential to the state's climate goals.



Growth Energy offers its support for funding the Biofuels Infrastructure Grant program. Minnesota is one of only a handful of states that recognizes the biofuels industry's efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Research has shown that Minnesota could reduce its annual GHG emissions by more than 330,000 tons by replacing E10 with E15. This is the emissions-reduction equivalent of removing more than 72,000 vehicles from the road, *without impacting a single driver*.<sup>5</sup>

Both the House and Senate versions of HF 2446, maintain substantial investments in those carbon emissions reduction efforts through the state's retail fuel industry. It also increases stable access to the domestic fuel market for Minnesota's corn growers, particularly as international markets experience uncertainty and the USDA's 2024 farm income forecast predicted a 24% drop in farm income.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=MN>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.airimprovement.com/reports/national-e15-analysis-final.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/AOF-2024-Litkowski.pdf>

We appreciate the opportunity to express our support for the Biofuels Infrastructure Grant program, thank Chairman Anderson for introducing the legislation, and respectfully request the committee's support for the bill. Additionally, we are available to assist the committee with any technical questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Bliley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "B" at the end.

Chris Bliley  
Senior Vice President of Regulatory Affairs  
Growth Energy



*Working to protect the Mississippi River  
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.*

101 East Fifth Street  
Suite 2000  
Saint Paul, MN 55101

651-222-2193  
[www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org)  
[info@fmr.org](mailto:info@fmr.org)

May 8, 2025

Sen. Aric Putnam  
3215 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Torrey Westrom  
2201 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sen. Rob Kupec  
3101 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Andy Smith  
5th Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. David Gottfried  
5th Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Paul Anderson  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Rick Hansen  
5th Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Bobbie Harder  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. John Burkel  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
658 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Omnibus agriculture and broadband development policy and finance bill (HF2446/SF2458)

Dear Members of the Conference Committee,

As you approach the end of the 2025 Legislative session, we wish to extend our appreciation for your efforts to advance "continuous living cover" (CLC) farming programs. Our goal at Friends of the Mississippi River is to improve the health of the River and its watershed through a variety of approaches including critical habitat restoration, land use planning, and agricultural sustainability programs. We regard the House and Senate Agriculture Committees as key partners in this work.

Years of research and analysis have led us to conclude that the most promising path to sustainability is the widespread adoption of market-based "continuous living cover" farming systems, which deliver a wide range of environmental and public health benefits including clean water, healthy soil, and wildlife habitat, all while providing additional, diversified revenue streams for farmers and new opportunities for farm businesses.

We are particularly grateful for your support for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative, the research and development engine that propels this entire effort. Both chambers' omnibus bills maintain base funding of \$1.604m over the biennium for Forever Green, money that will be used to advance critical projects on winter-hardy oilseeds, perennial grains and other promising systems. Forever Green's crop scientists and commercialization specialists are truly national leaders whose work and ideas have become a model for what is possible.

Novel crops need new value chains to reach consumers, and we look forward to working with you in future sessions to build out MDA's *Developing Markets for CLC Crops* grant program, which helps local businesses undertake the difficult work of building these value chains. By enabling investments in equipment, cooperative initiatives, and new product development, this program helps defray risk for Minnesota farmers and entrepreneurs and lay the foundation for a more robust, diversified agriculture sector that benefits all of us.

We recognize the difficulties you face in the current budgetary context, which make these investments all the more impactful. Thank you again for your work this session and for your continued support of CLC agriculture.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter LaFontaine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter LaFontaine  
Agricultural Policy Manager



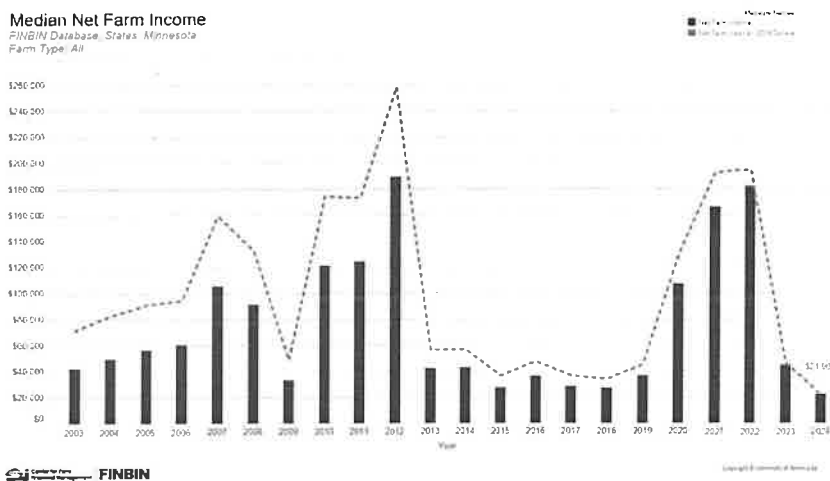
May 8, 2025

Agriculture Conference Committee Members:

I am writing in support of funding Farm Business Management (FBM) and Minnesota Agriculture Education Council (MAELC).

2024 marked the lowest median net farm income in over 20 years for our farmers as illustrated below. The education and support available through Farm Business Management is a key catalyst for farmers to navigate such economic challenges as low profitability continues in 2025.

The FBM faculty that meet farmers on their farms have a 71-year history of growing farmers profits, reducing risk, and driving farm resiliency as our farmer students have responded to our program surveys repeatedly. This type of program is a wise investment of our Minnesota resources at a critical time in their economic cycle.



Additionally, MAELC is a key component to a strong agricultural education sector and is in need of increased funding to match the increased program expansion at all levels of education in/about agriculture including FBM. I urge you to prioritize these programs in your funding plan.

Sincerely,



Keith Olander, Executive Director  
Dean of Agricultural Studies  
AgCentric and Agricultural Partnerships



1020 Innovation Lane | Mankato, MN 56001 | P: 763.235.6466  
[www.mcpr-cca.org](http://www.mcpr-cca.org)

To: House and Senate Conferees

RE: Omnibus Ag Bill – HF 2446 / SF 2458

Thank you for your efforts to ensure that Minnesota continues to have a strong ag sector. We appreciate your forward-looking investments and pragmatic approach to supporting key initiatives of interest to the agriculture community.

In the final bill, we would encourage the committee to include the following:

Senate Position:

\$50,000 for MDA to conduct a study and develop recommendations for establishing an incentive-based program to support and encourage agricultural retailers in promoting 4R nutrient management practices. The 4R nutrient management practices include: the right source of nutrients, at the right rate and right time, in the right place.

We strongly believe that the Ag Retailers and our professional staff of agronomists and certified crop advisers are well-positioned to help producers evaluate their nutrient management needs and make recommendations to improve overall fertilizer use efficiency at that statewide scale necessary to meet the State's Nutrient Reduction Strategy goals.

House Position:

We support the changes to allow handlers to engage in mixing, loading, and transporting of restricted use pesticides (RUP).

The revisions passed last session created a strain on staffing across the network of Ag Retailers and pesticide applicators. With workforce staffing issues across the agricultural sector, the additional burden to train and license staff supporting the licensed applicators is driving up costs and making it difficult to deliver services to our grower customers.

The application of restricted use products is currently well regulated. We believe allowing handlers to mix, load, and transport RUP's will not adversely impact public safety.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration. Please let me know if you would like any additional information.

Lee Helgen, Executive Director  
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Conference Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society (MSHS). We are grateful to see \$35,000 included in the Senate Agriculture Finance budget and respectfully request that this support be retained in the final version of HF 2446.

MSHS has a longstanding and productive partnership with the State of Minnesota. As early as 1873, the Legislature approved funding for the publication and distribution of 2,000 copies of MSHS's proceedings, a publication that would eventually evolve into *Northern Gardener* magazine. This early investment recognized the importance of sharing practical gardening knowledge statewide, a legacy that continues today through our programs, publications, and community partnerships.

Founded in 1866, MSHS supports home gardeners, educators, and community growers across USDA Zones 3–5, the full range of Minnesota's shorter and more challenging growing seasons. We specialize in helping Minnesotans grow food and care for their land, even in tough conditions.

State support helps us deliver:

- Garden-in-a-Box: Distributes raised bed kits and curriculum to schools and nonprofits, promoting healthy eating, STEM learning, and fresh food access.
- Minnesota Green: Rescues surplus plants from nurseries and growers and redistributes them to community gardens, maximizing the use of existing resources.
- The Tool Shed: A new USDA-supported digital hub offering zone-specific, translated how-to guides and gardening support for beginners and experienced growers alike.
- Public Engagement: Through our community events and *Northern Gardener* magazine, we engage tens of thousands of Minnesotans with timely, locally relevant content.

While our original request was for \$100,000 to scale our impact, we deeply appreciate the Legislature's continued investment, including \$34,000 in the last biennium, and now \$35,000 proposed in the Senate budget. Your support affirms the role of gardening in advancing food access, local resilience, and long-term land stewardship across Minnesota.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota communities.

Sincerely,

Lara Lau-Schommer



**Lara Lau-Schommer (she/her)**

Executive Director

651-643-3601 |

[lara@northerngardener.org](mailto:lara@northerngardener.org)

1935 County Road B2 W, Suite 125,  
Roseville, MN 55113





SECOND HARVEST  
NORTHLAND



May 9, 2025

Agriculture Conference Committee Members:

As food banks serving 46 counties throughout Greater Minnesota, we work closely with our food shelves, farmers, and local businesses to ensure that no family goes hungry.

Unfortunately, the need is growing, and we are falling further behind. Food shelves in our region are seeing record demand. Twice as many Minnesotans are turning to food shelves today compared to just three years ago, with 1 in 5 households in our state experiencing food insecurity in the past year. There is simply not enough food available to meet this demand.

Yet, recent announcements from the federal government included over \$1.5 billion in cuts to local food programs that support food banks, food shelves, and local farmers, including the cancellation of 34 full truckloads of food destined for Minnesota. Additional proposed cuts to federal SNAP benefits would make this situation even worse, especially in rural communities like ours. As lawmakers who care deeply about agriculture and rural hunger, we need your help.

We urgently ask for strong, bipartisan support for Minnesota's Farm to Food Shelf program. The House Agriculture bill cut funding for produce and protein, while the Senate maintained the full \$1.7 million. This program helps farmers and prevents food waste—distributing over 4.2 million pounds of produce, 155,000 pounds of protein, and nearly 300,000 gallons of milk in FY24.

Dairy, protein, and fresh produce are the most in-demand—and expensive—items at food shelves. Cutting this program would hurt food shelves, farmers, and hungry Minnesotans alike.

We understand the Legislature faces tough choices. But as frontline hunger relief organizations, we ask you to maintain full funding for the Farm to Food Shelf program so we can meet rising demand and support our communities.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment during this critical time.

Respectfully,

*Susie Novak Boelter*

Susie Novak Boelter, Executive Director  
North Country Food Bank

*Virginia Witherspoon*

Virginia Witherspoon, Executive Director  
Channel One Food Bank

*Shaye Moris*

Shaye Moris, President/CEO  
Second Harvest Northland



Chairs Putnam, Anderson, Hansen and Members of the Agriculture and Broadband Conference Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees' (MAPE) represented staff working for the Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Board of Animal Health (BAH), we want to share our perspective on the House and Senate's proposed versions of HF2446.

We recognize that difficult conversations need to be had when facing a projected structural imbalance in the coming years, so we are thankful for the operating adjustments being put forward by both bodies for the BAH. As avian flu poses a threat to our livestock and farms across Minnesota, it is important that our members who work to track and prevent outbreaks have the appropriate means to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. The operating adjustments provided in HF2446 ensure that they can continue to do the work that will serve Minnesotans.

The matching operating adjustment from both bodies appropriated for the MDA also provides important funding for the department. Our members at MDA respond to food emergencies that affect the public's health, oversee the licensing process for new and established food handlers, and overall contribute to a healthier Minnesota. With a sufficient operating adjustment, MAPE members will be able to continue to do the current level of services that Minnesotans have come to expect and trust.

We support the House's inclusion of allowing the commissioner of agriculture to use up to ten percent of the money appropriated for costs incurred to administer MDA's grant programs. The ability to retain these funds will alleviate operating pressures by providing the department with additional resources and flexibility.

Thank you for your commitment to fully funding the BAH and MDA. We hope you will consider adopting the House's language on the commissioner's ability to retain ten percent of the costs incurred to administer the department's grant program.

Sincerely,

Tanner Fritsinger

Political Affairs Coordinator

Minnesota Association of Professional Employees

**Re: Testimony of MNCFPA in Support of Cottage Food Language  
May 9, 2025**

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Agriculture and Broadband Development Policy and Finance Conference Committee:

My name is Jennifer Carriveau, and I am the vice president of the Minnesota Cottage Food Producers Association (MNCFPA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I ask the committee to please support the inclusion of the cottage food language that will protect Minnesota's cottage food producers' ability to earn a living, ship all cottage food products within the state, and support small business.

The language in SF 2458 supports cottage food businesses and food safety by:

- Creating a single tiered registration system that requires the cottage food producer to take the more advanced food safety training. It also removes the responsibility of the MDA to provide food safety training; therefore, eliminating the financial cost and reducing the costs associated with administering the cottage food registration.
- Permits cottage food producers to ship products statewide in Minnesota. They will be able to provide products to customers located in food deserts, sell products to customers from farmers markets and other events year-round, provide local products to community members, meet their financial needs, and more.
- Recognizes the importance of adjusting the revenue cap every two years based on inflation.
- Creates a registration fee of \$30 that will fund the MDA's administration of these changes.
- Replaces the word "individual" with "person" which is needed to make sure an individual who organizes their cottage food business as an LLC receives the registration in the LLC's name and not the "individual" dba "the LLC".

Please support all Minnesotans' access to local food, small business, and financial stability by allowing the cottage food language in SF2458 to be included in the final Agriculture and Broadband Development Policy and Finance Omnibus Bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carriveau  
Vice President  
MNCFPA  
[jcarriveau@mncfpa.org](mailto:jcarriveau@mncfpa.org)  
507-380-1308



**Testimony of Chad Martin in Support of Cottage Food Amendment**  
**5/8/2025**

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Agriculture and Broadband Development Policy and Finance Conference Committee:

My name is Chad Martin, and I am a cottage food producer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I ask that the committee please support the inclusion of the cottage food language that will protect my ability to earn a living, ship my cottage food products, and do what I love.

I freeze dry various candies and pickles in my home as a family business under the cottage food producer law. This business has allowed me time to work further on our goal of freeze drying full time and for this business to sustain us financially.

How will the laws changing help me?

- Currently I can only have customers within the time constraints of in person delivery options. So with this change, it will allow me to broaden my customer base to the entire state of MN with shipping options. This is very critical as we all know time is money!
- Raising the income cap for inflation is imperative as this keeps the rising costs from eating into our bottom line.

In summary if the cottage food law language changes, this would help me reach my goals of this business being our full time employment. This would lead to me leaving my day job, allowing me time to focus all my energy on a better locally made product for all.

Please help cottage food producers earn a living and increase access to local food by supporting this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Chad Martin  
**Adventures In Candy**  
16360 County Rd. 455  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
Phone: 651-230-4947  
E-mail: adventuresincandy@gmail.com

## **Testimony of [Karen Peterson] in Support of Cottage Food Amendment**

**[5-8-25]**

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Agriculture and Broadband Development Policy and Finance Conference Committee:

My name is Karen Peterson, and I am a registered cottage food producer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I ask that the committee please support the inclusion of the cottage food language that will protect my ability to earn a living, ship my cottage food products, and do what I love.

I started my cottage food journey as soon as the law became official July 1, 2015. In that time I have created memories for many families by creating edible art while learning new techniques on how to make cakes, cupcakes, decorated sugar cookies and so much more. The ability to have a creative outlet while making money for my family has been invaluable.

The proposed changes in the cottage food bill will allow me the ability to make more per year annually which in turn helps my family be more financially stable.

Having the ability to ship my non potentially hazardous foods within the state of Minnesota is a step in the right direction and will allow me to make additional income throughout the state rather than in my small community. Shipping opens up the doors for more sales annually.

Please help cottage food producers earn a living and increase access to local food by supporting this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Karen Peterson DBA Confections by Karen

118 2nd St NW, Blooming Prairie, MN 55927

507-340-0171

[Info@confections-by-karen.com](mailto:Info@confections-by-karen.com)

## **Testimony of Adriane Lepage in Support of Cottage Food Language**

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Agriculture and Broadband Development Policy and Finance Conference Committee:

My name is Adriane Lepage, and I am a cottage food producer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I ask that the committee please support the inclusion of the cottage food amendment that will protect my ability to earn a living, ship my cottage food products, and do what I love.

I own Cherry Street Bread, LLC, a sourdough-focused microbakery based out of my home in Stillwater, Minnesota. I began baking bread as a way for me to process and grieve the loss of my younger brother to brain cancer in 2021, when he was only 37 years old. As I baked more and began to share with neighbors and friends, I discovered that I could build a business baking bread out of my home under Minnesota Cottage Food laws. Cherry Street Bread now has a mailing list of over 300 customers (and growing) and receives 50-60 orders per week, sending 80-plus products out the door each Thursday. Earlier this year, I was awarded the “Best Bread in Stillwater” at an event hosted by the Washington County Historical Society.

Minnesota Cottage Food Law has allowed me to build this business while still having the flexibility to volunteer at my children’s school, run a small consulting business for nonprofit organizations in my community, and spend the summers with my kids while they’re young. I can be at home in the morning, reading and chatting with them over breakfast, and still run my bakery. We can spend weekends and holidays together and with extended family, neighbors, and friends. I could not have done this without cottage food law. This law has allowed me to build a business doing something I love while not compromising the other things in my life that are important to me and my family.

Raising the cap on how much cottage food producers can earn will allow me to continue operating my cottage bakery even as costs on equipment, utilities, and ingredients rise. It will allow me the freedom to expand and grow if and how I want to do so. This, in turn, will expand access to local food in my community at a time when small businesses are struggling. Two brick-and-mortar bakeries have closed in my community in the last year, citing rising costs and no longer wanting to choose between running a business and being with their families. The loss of these businesses has created major gaps in my community in terms of access to local food. This is where cottage food producers like me, and so many others, can step in and help keep our community strong, connected, and thriving. Raising the cap incentivizes cottage food producers to invest in and grow their businesses, which in turn expands access to local food in my community.

Even so, current Minnesota Cottage Food Law limits how and where I can grow my business. Allowing the shipping of cottage food products gives me the freedom to expand my business to neighboring communities. Currently, my model requires pickup at my home on a specific day in a six-hour window of time. I appreciate, however, that interested customers in surrounding communities like Lake Elmo, Oak Park Heights, Bayport, and Marine-on-St. Croix

do not always have the flexibility to come to Stillwater within that time frame. Expanding cottage food laws to permit shipping means I can work with local couriers or other delivery services to bring my product to those who want it but are currently unable to access it. It also means I can invest more into my business as it grows, since it opens up a larger market, which not only helps support my family, but supports our community as well.

Supporting the expansion of cottage food law in Minnesota means supporting communities, local economies, business owners, and families.

Please help cottage food producers earn a living and increase access to local food by supporting this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Name

**Adriane Lepage, Owner & Baker  
Cherry Street Bread, LLC  
110 Cherry Street East  
Stillwater, MN 55082**



May 8, 2025

Chairman Paul Anderson  
Agriculture, Broadband & Rural Development Policy and Appropriations Omnibus Bill Conference Committee  
MN State Capitol  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room G3  
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairman Anderson and House and Senate Conference Committee Conferees,

On behalf of the members of the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association (MGFA), a 118-year-old non-profit, voluntary membership organization that represents the grain elevator and feed mill industries of this state, I strongly encourage you to maintain the exclusion of the grain license and inspection fees in HF2446.

As MGFA previously testified to in committee hearings, the license and inspection fee increases will cost many grain buyers and storage facilities from 40 – 250% more to obtain their grain license. The base fee increase of \$500 per licensed location is higher compared to most of our neighboring states. The capacity charge per bushel for inspection fees specifically targets facilities with substantial storage capacity and increases their inspection fees by more than 155% at the top of the scale. As a result, this will drive larger cooperative grain elevators to become federally licensed, a more cost-effective choice than being State licensed under this proposal, which will translate into reduced projected income for MDA and less work for their grain inspection staff.

With spring planting well underway for Minnesota farmers, an increase in grain license and inspection fees for licensed grain buyers in the Senate version of this bill will undoubtedly land on the shoulders of Minnesota's producers when they sell their grain at harvest. The farm economy is in turmoil with the high cost of crop inputs, depressed grain markets and uncertainty due to the tariff situation. Now is not the time to add burdensome licensing and inspection fees to the grain industry that will ultimately be paid by Minnesota farmers.

Finally, while MGFA is sympathetic to the projected budget shortfall of MDA's grain program, the proposed license and inspection fee increase is exorbitant and unfair in this economic climate. Instead, MGFA would be interested in collaborating with MDA to find a solution that works for the grain industry and MDA.

Sincerely,

Laura Lemke  
MGFA Executive Director



# FARMWARD

## COOPERATIVE

Advancing farming for generations

April 8, 2025

Co-Chair Rick Hansen & Co-Chair Paul Anderson  
Minnesota House of Representatives Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee  
Email: [rep.rick.hansen@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.rick.hansen@house.mn.gov); [rep.paul.anderson@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.paul.anderson@house.mn.gov)  
cc: [Peter.strohmeier@house.mn.gov](mailto:Peter.strohmeier@house.mn.gov); [Mark.nisley@house.mn.gov](mailto:Mark.nisley@house.mn.gov)  
Re: HF2446 DE4 Amendment

Chairs and Members of the House Agriculture Finance & Policy Committee:

I am writing to share my gratitude for the bipartisan work that went into preparing the House Ag Committee's omnibus bill that was presented on Monday, April 7th. In particular, I want to share my thanks for the leaders and staff who heard the concerns brought by grain elevator operators and farmer-owned cooperatives regarding changes in the state grain buyers and storage license fee structure. The absence of these changes in the amendment you presented to the committee is greatly appreciated by Farmward Cooperative, and many other farmer-owned cooperatives throughout the state who would have been greatly impacted by the original bill language.

As the CEO of Farmward Cooperative, we're here to help guide growers through the current tumultuous farm economic landscape, help them reap the benefits, and mitigate the most difficult challenges. Headquartered in Morgan, Minnesota, Farmward has outlet locations in Clements, Comfrey, Danube, Morton, Olivia, Renville, Sacred Heart, Springfield, Wabasso, and Wood Lake. We have a diverse line of products and services for our farmer-owners, including grain handling and marketing.

This is a critical time to do everything we can to help farmers succeed in a very difficult market environment, and adding burdensome new license costs during this time doesn't help us achieve that goal. That said, we want to thank the professionals at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for the critical work they do to audit and inspect our state's licensed grain facilities, and we hope that the chairs will work together to find a more reasonable fee structure that will ensure they have the resources they need to do their required work and not increase fees for smaller co-ops like ours by 250%.

Farmward Cooperative, and our friends at the Cooperative Network, appreciate your attention to this issue and we are grateful that you heard the concerns of our cooperatives and their farmer-owners. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Husk, Chief Executive Officer  
Farmward Cooperative  
PO Box 278  
Morgan, MN 56266

---

Business office: 507.249.3196 or toll free 800.245.5819 | [www.farmward.net](http://www.farmward.net)

Clements 507.692.2276 | Comfrey 507.877.2441 | Danube 320.826.2214 | Morgan 507.249.3196 | Morton 507.697.6113 | Olivia 320.523.1811  
Renville 320.329.6733 | Sacred Heart 320.765.2726 | Springfield 507.723.7350 | Wabasso 507.342.5184 | Wood Lake 507.485.3153

---

Dr. Ronald Gaskin 536 1<sup>st</sup> Ave E Shakopee, MN

Owner of Main Street Veterinary Service

In support of complete HF 2446 73.26 with Subd 4. included

**Subd. 4. Civil penalties.** A person who violates this section is subject to a civil penalty of \$500 for the first violation, \$1,000 for the second violation, and \$2,500 for the third and any subsequent violation. Civil penalties may be recovered by a civil action brought by the county attorney or the attorney general in the name of the state.

Re: 73.26 Subd. 4. Civil penalties . . . .”

Performing a procedure that provides no medical benefit to the cat and inflicts suffering rather than preventing it violates the AVMA’s Veterinarian’s Oath in letter and in spirit. A violation of the declawing prohibition would be an aggravating component. Not including penalties would render the prohibition ineffective and uphold continued elective declawing, defeating the purpose of the bill.

I have been a veterinarian for 42 years. I see firsthand the functional damage caused by declawing surgery. Declawing modifies how cats walk and forces them to walk directly on their amputated toes. The resulting pain and redistribution of weight increase the chance of hip arthritis and lower back pain. When bone fragments are left behind, which is a frequent post-surgery finding, the pain is intensified. Ongoing pain can trigger aggressive behavior, elimination outside of the litter box, and biting. This behavior can lead to cats losing their homes.

This surgery has been done with the profession’s failure to recognize its **long-term** effects.

By swearing the AVMA’s Veterinarian’s Oath, veterinarians declare that we will prevent and relieve animal suffering. Performing a painful elective procedure that provides no medical benefit to the cat, for the convenience of an owner, inflicts suffering rather than preventing it and, therefore, violates our oath.

The Centers for Disease Control also does not advocate for the declawing of cats, even if they live with immunocompromised owners.

The University of MN no longer teaches declaw surgery. Scratching is normal behavior in cats. The new veterinarian has a toolbox of behavioral modification and redirection techniques to prevent unwanted scratching behavior. A cat's claws can be trimmed and/or coated with a plastic cover as the cat is redirected to suitable scratching surfaces. Educating owners is key.

The elective declawing of cats is unnecessary, cruel, and should be banned.

Chairman Anderson and Conference Committee Members, thank you for your time.



Dear Committee members,

My name is Megan Hamilton and I'm the founder of Basils Cradle, a 501c3 nonprofit sanctuary for special needs cats, based in St. Louis Park, MN.

I looked at HF 2246 first unofficial engrossment today and was appalled and astonished to find that the civil penalties section of the declawing ban bill HF1857 has completely disappeared.

I am writing to you today to urge you to make sure that the penalties described in the declawing ban bill HF1857 are not removed.

There is no plausible defense to creating a law prohibiting an elective procedure that is of no medical benefit to the cat and causes pain and suffering, without including penalties for violating the prohibition. If there are no consequences, such a prohibition is pointless, cats will continue to suffer, and nothing will have changed. That would counteract the goal of this bill, whose objective it is to stop elective declawing!

My experience regarding declawed cats and the cruelty involved in this procedure spans many decades.

I'm 65 years old and I've been rescuing cats for the past 47 years. Many of these cats were declawed and then abandoned.

I have and continue to witness the damage that amputating cats' toes can cause. I and many other rescues help those we can, but we can't save them all, and the cats we do save often stay in rescue and are never adopted out due to the behavioral issues and costs that we work so hard to manage. These cats were discarded and left either on the streets, or abandoned at animal control or shelters like damaged goods. The majority of them are on life-long medication to manage the irreversible pain they experience, and/or behavior drugs such as Prozac to mitigate the resulting unwanted behaviors and psychological damage they suffer.

Many veterinarians who still practice declawing justify it by claiming that declawing will keep cats in their homes and not be euthanized for unwanted behaviors. This is an easily disproved myth. Many declawed cats end up abandoned precisely because their owners do not want to deal with their behavioral issues after declawing. Many lose their lives in shelters when they are deemed unadoptable due to declaw-related behaviors such as biting, and not using the litter box, instead urinating on carpets, beds and furniture.

Amputating cats toes for the convenience of owners is callous, cruel, and I am asking you to ensure that HF1857 goes forward with the penalties intact.

I'm attaching the profiles of several declawed cats, whom I have rescued, to illustrate the tragic consequences that unfortunately happen all too often to cats who have been declawed, and then discarded.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Megan Hamilton

President

Basil's Cradle