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March 8, 2020

Chair Connie Bernardy
House Higher Education Finance and Policy Committee
563 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bernardy and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our support for Rep. Acomb's bill to provide the University of Minnesota Extension (Extension) with funding to help farmers and others prepare for and adapt to extreme weather (HF3759). This investment in ensuring that good data is used to inform on-the-ground decision-making will help make our members more resilient going forward.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. This past summer, nearly 80 percent of Minnesota faced severe drought conditions that stunted the growth of conventional and specialty crops, dried up water sources for livestock and deteriorated pasture used for haying and grazing. At present, 70 percent of the state is still abnormally dry. This 30-year drought came just on the heels of 2019, which marked Minnesota's wettest year on record.

Farmers are coming up with creative ways to remain resilient, while actively working to mitigate and even reverse the worst effects of climate change. Extension is a good partner in this work and helps farmers make better-informed management decisions for their farms. Better and more accessible information about extreme weather will help inform our members' decisions about installing drain tile, planning crop rotations, or choosing traits to breed for in livestock.

Farmers depend on the weather, and the science informing projected trends is changing quickly. Funding for Extension to help make sure this data is used to inform management practices will help producers remain resilient to future disruptions like last summer's drought. We thank Rep. Acomb for her work on this issue and appreciate the committee's consideration. 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