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February 13, 2023

Rep. Fue Lee, Chair
House Capital Investment Committee

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), thank you for including provisions in HF 669 that invest \$10.7 million in bonding for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program. This important program through the state Board of Water and Soil Resources is administered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts, working with interested landowners to enroll marginal agricultural land into permanent conservation easements.

As you know, Minnesota has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture known as the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP). Minnesota's CREP is currently \$10.7 million away from meeting the total state contribution needed to fully leverage the \$350 million in federal funds. This represents an overall federal match of \$2 federal for every \$1 state. The federal dollars come in the form of landowner payments through USDA's Conservation Reserve Program.

MN CREP helps us make strides in achieving our water quality goals and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, through wetland restorations (which also offer water storage on the landscape), riparian buffers, and wellhead protection easements. The easements also provide significant carbon sequestration benefits on the private lands voluntarily enrolled in the program.

Thank you, Chair Lee and Committee Members, for your continued support of water quality and wildlife habitat in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Chuck Rau
President
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts