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March 25, 2026

To: MN House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee

Re: HF 3957 – Minnesota Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council

Minnesota Crop Production Retailers (MCPR) is a statewide trade association representing the agricultural co-ops and ag retailers in Minnesota.

MCPR opposes the proposed changes to the funding mechanism that remove the council's ability to guide research funding and allocate money to long-term projects.

The council's funding comes from the 40-cent-per-ton fee on bulk fertilizer sales, which is paid by producers and collected by ag retailers. The AFREC approach was designed to provide high-quality research to improve fertilizer efficiency and nutrient management across a wide range of crops. The council's membership includes a broad cross-section of agricultural organizations best positioned to determine what research is needed and to ensure funds are used wisely. AFREC's ability to fund long-term research and its flexibility to meet emerging needs are hallmarks of the program.

The research selection process is aligned with the Council's priorities and is consistent with state legislative guidance. Further, the proposed research projects are peer-reviewed and scored to ensure that the funded activities are relevant and conducted with sound methodologies. The MDA provides accountability and fiscal management to ensure funds are spent appropriately, and it provides the staff capacity to run the council professionally. This council-led approach to funding decisions, along with state agency oversight, ensures transparency and keeps responsibilities separate to prevent misuse of funds or conflicts of interest. The funding allocation process ensures there is broad stakeholder buy-in and builds ongoing support for the program.

Our ag retailers and industry partners continue to support AFREC's mission and recommend maintaining the council's role. Again, thank you for your thoughtful consideration and ongoing support for agriculture in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Lee Helgen, Executive Director
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers