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March 1, 2023

Chair Samantha Vang
House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Vang and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share my strong support for Representative Sencer-Mura's bill to fund the Good Acre's Local Emergency Assistance Farmer Fund (LEAFF) and establish similar pilot programs in rural Minnesota (HF1744). This program is a model for how investments in food assistance can be leveraged to create new markets for emerging farmers.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. At its most basic level, MFU was founded to help farmers earn a fair price for the products they produce—and that starts with markets. For many small, emerging farmers in our membership, markets can make or break their operation, particularly in the first years. That is why the work that the Good Acre is doing with the LEAFF program is so important. It provides emerging farmers a reliable, consistent market for the products they produce, while also achieving the important aim of ensuring that Minnesotans have access to affordable, culturally relevant food.

Finally, we are excited to share our strong support for the regional pilots proposed under the bill. Born out of the pandemic when many produce farmers lost their markets virtually overnight, LEAFF is a prime example of positive innovation coming from challenges businesses faced during COVID-19. The state would be smart to build on this success and ensure that more farmers benefit from this successful and innovative program.

I appreciate your consideration of this investment and hope it earns your support. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047 (C). Thank you for your work on behalf of farmers and all Minnesotans.

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