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March 8, 2022

Chair Torrey Westrom
Senate Agriculture and Rural Development Finance and Policy Committee
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Westrom and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share my strong support for Vice Chair Dahms' work to fund the Forever Green Initiative (FGI) at the University of Minnesota (UMN) (SF3711). This foundational investment is central to the successful development and commercialization of perennial and winter annual crops, which 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.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. At MFU, a growing number of our members are growing FGI's first commercialized crop: a perennial wheatgrass called Kernza. Previous funding from the legislature helped make them successful in not only growing this new crop, but also processing, marketing, and otherwise building out the infrastructure necessary for its sustainable commercialization.

With strong state support, the University can leverage private funding for research, making this a smart investment in the future of rural Minnesota's economy and landscape. We value the University's continued partnership with farmers in developing these new cropping systems in a way that supports farmers and rural economic vitality.

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