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March 20, 2023

Chair Aric Putnam
Senate Agriculture Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3215
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Putnam and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our organization's support for Senator Kunesh's bill (SF2900) to provide state support for farmers markets across our state. The strong network of farmers markets across the state help our family farmer members sell their products, develop relationships with consumers, and network with other farmers.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. Many of our members sell at least some of their products direct-to-consumer, ensuring that they earn a greater portion of every food dollar. In particular for new and emerging farmers, farmers markets are a key venue that helps them develop their farm businesses, build a network of customers, introduce the public to new products, and network with other farmers. Importantly, farmers markets are also a place where our members access important information for their business—including as it relates to food safety and state programs.

Minnesota's more than 360 farmers markets are also important to the large and small communities they serve in every corner of the state. Farmers markets build community character, develop new food businesses, and help connect the consumer to their food. An investment in farmers markets is a win for the markets, their host communities, and farmers.

We thank Senator Kunesh for her leadership on this issue—both in and outside of the legislature. 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 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 style with a large, prominent "G" and "W".

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union