March 27, 2023

Chair Aric Putnam
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee
RE: Senate File 2218
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3215
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Putnam,

Thank you and the Members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony in regards to Senate File 1955, the Senate Agriculture Finance Omnibus Bill.

My name is David Larson, and I am the Government Affairs Director for Cooperative Network. Our members are owned by millions of residents throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin and include member-owned farm supply, dairy marketing, livestock marketing, financial, health care, mutual insurance, processing, electric utility, housing, food, and worker-owned cooperatives, among others.

We appreciate you, Chair Putnam, for bringing this omnibus bill in front of the Committee. Cooperative Network and our members are supportive and appreciative of many provisions within this bill, including the $500,000 in funding for cooperative development grants, the $2 million in funding for the soil health financial assistance program, and the $9 million in funding for grants for petroleum retailers to replace dispensers and storage tanks with equipment built for a higher grade of biofuel.

However, there is one provision specifically that our cooperative members oppose: the creation of the Grain Indemnity Fund. There are many challenges facing Minnesota's agricultural economy today and the creation of a program that would be funded by our cooperatives and their member-owners is one that we respectfully oppose, especially when there are preventative measures that could be strengthened instead to minimize future insolvencies.

Our cooperative members look forward to working with you, the Members of the Committee, and the Department on the issues mentioned above.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Larson
Government Affairs Director
Cooperative Network

CC: Members of the Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee