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Senator Aric Putnam
3215 Minnesota Senate Building
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee
95 University Ave W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 27, 2023

Chair Putnam, and Members of the Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development Committee:

As the Committee reviews the DE amendment to SF1955, the committee's omnibus finance bill, we write to share our support for general fund investments in programs that will benefit people and nature across the state.

We are particularly pleased to see an appropriation for and establishment of the Soil Health Financial Assistance program at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 2(b) and Article 2, Section 2). We thank you for your inclusion of this important program that provides financial assistance to farmers for a broad set of soil health practices.

The program is not limited to traditional cost-share, and can include down payments on equipment, purchases or subscription of equipment, low interest loans, and purchases of seed, and technical assistance for conservation plans. This financial assistance will lower the risk to soil health adoption and help farmers overcome barriers to implementing practices across the state.

We appreciate the \$2,000,000 proposed one-time investment in the program included in SF1955, and know it will help expand and further establish this program. However, after significant demand for the program on a pilot basis, greater investment will be needed to meet demands and make significant gains towards statewide adoption of these practices. If a future opportunity allows, we encourage the committee to invest \$10,000,000 one-time with an ongoing investment of \$2,000,000 as was included in SF1245, by Senator Gustafson, which has been considered by the committee.

Research shows we have a high potential to increase carbon storage through natural lands, including crop lands, in Minnesota. Soil health practices help store carbon while providing benefits for water quality and quantity. There is an urgent need for these activities to expand to a meaningful scale, while require farm operations of all types and sizes to have support to implement and expand soil health practice adoption.

Thank you again for your inclusion of this program in the DE amendment to SF1955.

Sincerely,

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