



Finance Committee  
Chair Senator John Marty  
3235 Minnesota Senate Building  
St Paul, MN 55155

April 10, 2023

Dear Chair Marty and Senate Finance Committee members,

Thank you for your service to the people of Minnesota, and for the opportunity to provide comments on the Omnibus Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development appropriations bill - SF 1955. We would also like to thank Senator Putnam for his thoughtful development of this budget bill with the limited resources he has been granted. As a major agricultural state, Minnesota is uniquely poised to lead the nation in investment in our farmers, food systems, natural resources, and rural economies, providing a healthy future for all Minnesotans and our lands and waters. This economy is driven by farmers, farmworkers, food makers, processors, and entrepreneurs, who are vital to stewarding our soil and water, nourishing our communities, and are the bedrock of many of our rural communities.

**On behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership - the state's largest coalition of environmental and conservation organizations - I am writing to ask legislative leadership to dedicate at least \$110 million to the agriculture area to tangibly deliver for people, land and water.** Investing in our farmers, regenerative food systems, and providing healthy, local products to Minnesotans is one of the smartest investments our state can make.

Together, we can:

- Enable land access and farm viability for emerging farmers, expanding capital, training, technical assistance, and support for small- and mid-sized emerging, beginning, and aspiring farmers.
- Leverage Minnesota agriculture to create positive climate and ecosystem restoration, providing the resources farmers need to build the health of their soil, protect and restore water quality, build resiliency from extreme weather, and combat climate change.
- Increase financial and capacity investments in infrastructure, small and mid-size processing and market development state-wide, supporting resilient local and regional food systems that strengthen rural economies and reduce reliance on distant suppliers.
- Link nutrition and food access needs to Minnesota agricultural producers, ensuring all Minnesotans have nutritious food.

With a historic \$17.6 billion surplus, our state legislature has a unique opportunity and responsibility to deliver for small- and mid-sized farmers, our farm and food system, rural communities, and families in need across the state. The announced agriculture budget target of \$48 million in additional funds for agriculture does not create space for appropriate investment in Minnesota's farm

and food system and will necessitate leaving crucial programs out of the budget in a time of abundance when we should be increasing support and investment.

We recognize that these priorities are interconnected, and decision makers should be given a budget target with room to support Minnesota's farm and food system holistically. A budget target increase of \$110 million would have a profound impact on issues which impact all Minnesotans. This level of support would demonstrate a strong commitment to farmers and rural Minnesotan communities and take advantage of proposed strategic opportunities for one time investment included in the Agriculture budget.

Thank you for your leadership. I look forward to working with you to support and invest in a regenerative food system and our Minnesota farmers and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Morse". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Steve Morse  
Executive Director

CC: Agriculture Chairs, Vice Chairs; MDA Leadership