

March 13, 2023

Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
Chair Melissa Wiklund  
1100 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298



Chair Wiklund and members of the committee,

Minnesota's pig farmers and the Minnesota Pork Producers Association strongly support SF 1747, appropriating funding to the Center for Rural Behavioral Health at Minnesota State University, Mankato to establish a mental health training clinic.

Pig farmers know first-hand the importance and foundational value mental health and well-being brings to our farms, our families, our employees, and our rural communities. By every statistical measure, the mental well-being of Minnesotans has never been worse. This is only exacerbated by a lack of access to behavioral health services and providers. As this treatment gap between consumers and providers continues to grow, it's important to recognize it is not geographically equitable in our state. While residents of greater Minnesota have similar emotional challenges to those in the metro area, they have fewer providers who are trained to help and provide this increasingly important care. Minnesota pig farmers strongly believe in the value of investing in the development of people and ask for your support in doing the same.

The impact of poor mental health on the agricultural community cannot be understated. The success of our farms, agricultural partners, and rural communities requires a physically and emotionally healthy workforce. We need additional resources in greater Minnesota communities. The Center for Rural Behavioral Health training clinic would provide a workforce development opportunity growing the number of behavioral health professionals who will serve the current, and next generation of Minnesotans. At the same time, this community-facing training clinic would help address an unmet need of providing mental healthcare services for the residents of southern Minnesota.

While SF 1747 will not solve all the mental health challenges facing our state, it will go a long way to ensuring those who call greater Minnesota home, will have access to mental healthcare when they need it. Thank you Sen. Frentz for bringing this bill forward and thank you for your consideration and support of this critical need in rural Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Daryl Timmerman  
President, Minnesota Pork Producers Association