

April 14, 2024

Senator Aric Putnam, Chair  
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee  
3215 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

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

On behalf of the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), which represents fifteen of Minnesota's larger and faster growing counties including four suburban and eleven Greater Minnesota counties, I write to support provisions of SF3955-A3 DE Amendment that are aimed at addressing nitrate groundwater contamination certain Southeast Minnesota counties.

Two of MICA's members, Olmsted County and Winona County, were named in the Safe Drinking Water Act petition submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the spring of 2023. These counties, along with parts of Rice County and Dakota County, share Karst geological characteristics that amplify immediate challenges related to nitrate contamination. Specifically, we support:

- \$750,000 in FY 2025 for reverse osmosis systems to treat nitrates in drinking water;
- \$500,000 in FY2025 for soil health equipment grants; and
- \$2.0 million in FY2025 to the Commissioner of Health to address nitrate contamination in private wells.

More broadly, all our county members work in tandem with soil and water conservation districts and other stakeholders to manage the local government response to water quality issues.

Additionally, we recognize and support the benefits of extending the existing 40 cent per ton fertilizer fee for the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC), which funds research related to nitrogen and water quality issues.

While current budgetary constraints may limit broader steps this legislative session, we encourage that any initiatives or funding passed this year be viewed as “pilot projects,” and expanded to include all Minnesota counties in future years. This includes increased financial incentives for farmers to implement the agricultural best management practices suited for their region, geology and soil.

Thank you, Chair Putnam and committee members for the opportunity to provide written testimony and for your consideration of these priorities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Matt Massman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Matt Massman**, *Executive Director*  
*Minnesota Inter-County Association*