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March 1, 2024

Senator Bobby Joe Champion
President of the Senate
95 University Avenue West, Room 3401
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Champion,

On behalf of the members of the Greater Minnesota Partnership (GMNP), I offer this letter of support for the confirmation of Matt Varilek as Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The Greater Minnesota Partnership is a nonprofit organization comprised of local units of government, economic development organizations, businesses, nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce, colleges, and other stakeholders from throughout Greater Minnesota.

Commissioner Varilek is an outstanding example of exceptional leadership in economic development and an ardent advocate for a state where businesses and families can prosper. Commissioner Varilek embodies the subject matter expertise, values, relationships, and governance acumen that is clearly present throughout his career.

Commissioner Varilek's journey in economic development is extensive with his leadership position at the U.S. Small Business Administration and his stewardship of the Initiative Foundation serving central Minnesota. He is truly a skilled practitioner, having led his team and partners through the successful deployment of millions of dollars in pandemic relief programs, such as Minnesota Small Business Relief Grants, Minnesota Small Business Emergency Loans, Main Street COVID Relief Grants, and many programs and initiatives as a federally designated Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

Commissioner Varilek clearly understands and embraces the relationship and differences between the opportunities and challenges of rural and urban economies. He is widely respected by business and nonprofit leaders, elected officials, and community champions throughout Minnesota. He easily navigates between big-picture strategy and execution, demonstrating his deft ability to consistently serve as a great team leader.

We look forward to a successful confirmation process and the continued exemplary leadership from Commissioner Varilek and his team.

Sincerely,

Scott McMahon
Executive Director
Greater Minnesota Partnership

*The Greater Minnesota Partnership advocates for public policies and investments
that stimulate prosperity throughout Greater Minnesota.*