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March 11, 2024

**Rick Horton Testimony**

Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

Chair: Sen. Ron Latz

RE: S.F. 4038

Chair Latz and Members,

My name is Rick Horton, I am the Executive Vice President of Minnesota Forest Industries. We are a trade association representing the large wood consuming mills in Minnesota that transform trees into products we use every day.

I am testifying in support of **Senate File 4038**.

Trade associations by their very nature bring industry competitors together to work cooperatively on issues relevant to the industry as a whole. But we do not discuss markets, prices, wood consumption, and other information that could be used improperly. Antitrust laws are designed to promote fair competition in markets and prevent anti-competitive behavior. Our industry takes antitrust very seriously.

The Minnesota DNR is taking over conducting the annual **Timber Product Output** survey from the USDA Forest Service in order to get this important information to stakeholders in a more timely manner. But DNR feels that the data privacy statutes governing this process are not clear and have proposed the solution found in this bill.

It is critical that survey data be handled carefully, ensuring compliance with antitrust regulations and safeguarding against any potential misuse that could harm competition in the market. It must be protected and only shared in aggregate form that prevents others from using it improperly.

By protecting sensitive or confidential information, this bill will also increase survey response rates by assuring that responses are private.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in and thank you Senator Hauschild for carrying this important bill.