



305 Roselawn Ave E | Suite 200 | St. Paul, MN 55117
Phone: (651) 639-1223 | www.mfu.org

March 21, 2025

Chair Tou Xiong
Senate State and Local Government Committee
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Xiong and committee members:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I am writing to share our support for Senator Maye Quade's SF2600, which would ensure that state agencies use at least half of their advertising expenditures on advertising through local news organizations. This can help provide struggling local news organizations with an additional investment, hopefully allowing more of these businesses to stay afloat.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. Our members care deeply about local news and see it as a key part of a healthy and vibrant democracy. Furthermore, our organization relies on local news as a way to communicate with members and communities across the state. MFU appreciates that SF2600 emphasizes that agency advertising investments should be targeted to local newspapers, as the odds are heavily stacked against these critical small businesses.

According to a database at the Hussman School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina, between 2004 and 2019 Minnesota lost 22% of its newspapers, with most of that decrease among weekly newspapers. Those that remain are operating with skeleton staffs as Minnesota lost 80% of its reporters between 2005 and 2020. This has left rural communities with less of the information they need.

While this legislation will not address the structural issues, including the rise of Big Tech monopolies, that have significantly undermined local newspapers, it will help the bottom lines of these essential institutions.

We are grateful to Senator Maye Quade as well as Senator Rasmusson for bringing this bipartisan legislation forward and urge the committee to support SF2600. If you have any questions, please contact our Antimonopoly Director, Justin Stofferahn, at justin@mfu.org or (612) 594-1252 (C). Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farm families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Wertish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union