

April 1, 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 SF3044 which contains the FY26-27 budget proposal for the Attorney General's Office. This budget proposal will build on the work Attorney General Keith Ellison has done to prioritize investments in protecting fair, open and competitive markets in Minnesota.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. At our annual convention in November, MFU members voted to make Ensuring Fair Markets a key priority and identified investing in antitrust agencies as important to that goal.

Farmers find themselves on the front lines of our monopoly crisis facing extreme consolidation for both the inputs they rely on the markets they need to access. While corporate monopolies make record profits, farmers now receive under 16 cents of each dollar consumers spend on food, which is down from 50 cents in 1952.¹ Addressing this challenge requires robust antitrust enforcement at both a federal and state level, and Minnesota is leading on these issues.

Because of the investments legislators made in recent years, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) has been able to expand their antitrust enforcement team and establish a separate Antitrust Division. This investment is helping protect Minnesotans from powerful companies that abuse their market power. Highlights of that work include:

- A 2022 lawsuit with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) alleging pesticide manufacturers Syngenta and Corteva used loyalty programs to raise costs on farmers.
- A 2023 lawsuit with the Department of Justice (DOJ) alleging Agri Stats and major meatpackers colluded to fix the price of meat and raise costs on consumers.
- The 2023 investigation of the Sanford-Fairview merger and subsequent implementation of a nation-leading law strengthening standards for large healthcare mergers.
- A 2025 lawsuit with the FTC alleging John Deere has monopolized the market for repairs of its tractors and combines.

SF3044 will enhance these efforts by allowing the AGO to hire an additional attorney in the Antitrust Division. The important enforcement actions detailed above are complex cases that require appropriate staff resources.

SF3044 also takes the important step of making the recently established Consumer Litigation Account more sustainable by turning it into a revolving fund. The Consumer Litigation Account was established in 2023 with one-time funding and supports multistate litigation across the AGO's

Consumer Protection Section which includes the Consumer Protection, Antitrust, Civil Rights and Wage Theft Divisions.

Multistate antitrust cases are particularly important for protecting fair markets in agriculture but are often complex and costly. Making the Consumer Litigation Account a revolving fund will help ensure the AGO has the resources needed to continue strong enforcement of our antitrust laws and also mirrors how antitrust enforcement is funded in other states.

Corporate consolidation is pervasive and growing, and limits rural economic vitality, stifles innovation and entrepreneurship, drives down wages and otherwise limits people's voices in our economy and democracy. One way for legislators to address these harms is to ensure strong investment in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office and SF3044 does that.

We urge the committee to support this proposal. 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 fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Wertish" clearly legible.

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union

ⁱ <https://nfu.org/farmers-share/>