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April 8, 2025

Chair Omar Fateh
Higher Education Committee
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Opposition to eliminating Rural Vet Loan Repayment Program in SF2483 DE

Dear Chair Fateh and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our concern about eliminating the Rural Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program in the Higher Education omnibus (SF2483 DE). The lack of large animal veterinarians in rural Minnesota is a top concern for our family farmer members and Minnesota's loan forgiveness program is a key, proven means for addressing this critical gap. We hope that as this bill moves forward you'll restore funding for this important program.

MFU is a grassroots membership organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. The Minnesota Veterinarians Loan Forgiveness Program helps alleviate the financial burden of student debt for veterinarians who commit to practicing in rural areas, where their services are desperately needed. With the increasing cost of veterinary education, young professionals often struggle to establish practices in rural communities without financial assistance. Cutting funding for this program would exacerbate the shortage of veterinary professionals in these areas, negatively impacting farmers, animal health, and rural economies.

Importantly, this program is a proven. Approximately 95 percent of those who've received loan forgiveness have stayed to practice in critical areas. Particularly in the face of damaging new animal diseases, now is the time to ensure that farmers, county fairs, livestock auctions, and others have the professional help they need to ensure the health of livestock.

We understand that crafting a budget requires difficult decisions. And we appreciate your consideration and hope this program earns your support. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047 (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" being more prominent than the last name "Wertish".

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union