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February 23, 2021

Chair Zack Stephenson
House Commerce Finance and Policy
509 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Stephenson and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to express strong support for expanding MinnesotaCare with a public option. This would provide important and needed relief to farmers and others who are too often priced out of coverage on the private market.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. As small business owners, family farmers disproportionately purchase health insurance on the private market and are hit hard by high premiums and lack of choice between health plans in rural areas. This cuts into their farm income and pushes too many farmers to consider giving up the farm, seek a second off-farm job with insurance, or go without health coverage all together—a decision that could prove financially devastating.

Not only that, but I've heard from farmer members who hire employees and feel like they could better compete with other employers for qualified workers if there were better options for health coverage. Based on these experiences and more, our members believe strongly that everyone deserves affordable, comprehensive health coverage when they need it.

That's why in November, delegates to our state convention voted to again make affordable health care a special order of business for the 2022 legislative session. We can and must do better.

I am glad to add our voice to those calling for a public option. 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 written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union