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February 28, 2024

Chair Aric Putnam
Senate Agriculture Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3215
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Putnam and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to share our organization's support for your bill (SF3404) to ensure that all farmers markets—and particularly smaller markets in more rural areas—can serve Minnesotans who use SNAP and other food programs. Dollars spent at farmers markets go directly to support farmers in our membership, making this change a win-win for farmers and families relying on food assistance.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. Many of our members sell at least some of their products direct-to-consumer, ensuring that they earn a greater portion of every food dollar. In particular for new and emerging farmers, farmers markets are a key venue that helps them develop their farm businesses, build a network of customers, introduce the public to new products, and network with other farmers.

Making this small change will ensure that your investment in farmers markets goes further to help the more than 375 farmers market, and particularly those who don't have dedicated staff capacity. This will benefit farmers who will sell more products, families who gain greater access to healthy food, and markets who will be able to better serve everyone in their community.

We thank Senator Putnam for his leadership on this issue. 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