



May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chair Aric Putnam  
Senate Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and  
Rural Development Committee

Co-Chairs Paul Anderson and Rick Hansen  
House Agriculture Finance and Policy  
Committee

Dear Chairs Putnam, Anderson and Hansen,

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) appreciates the opportunity to voice our support on specific provisions included in the omnibus agriculture and broadband finance bill. MCGA represents nearly 7,000 dues-paying family farmer members and all of Minnesota's 24,000 corn farmers who contribute to the corn checkoff program for research and education activities.

MCGA strongly supports the following provisions in the Agriculture Appropriations side-by-side:

Continued funding for the Biofuels Financial Assistance Program (Page R8)

We appreciate both the House and Senate for including funding for this program. The Biofuels Infrastructure Grant Program was established by the Legislature in 2021. In the first three years of the program MDA awarded a total of 60 grants totaling \$9.5 million with grantees contributing an estimated \$11.6 million in matching funds once the projects are completed. The program provides grants up to \$199,000 to fuel retailers to upgrade their equipment and begin offering mid and higher-level blends of biofuels including E15, a fuel blend containing 15 percent ethanol.

E15, often marketed as Unleaded 88, is approved for use in all vehicles 2001 and newer and offers higher octane at a lower price without sacrificing gas mileage. Unleaded 88 also cuts GHG emissions by about 2.5 percent compared to regular E10 gasoline and nearly 7.5 percent compared to gasoline without any ethanol added. In 2024, Minnesota surpassed 500 stations offering Unleaded 88 with record sales of over 140 million gallons sold. But with over 2,000 fuel stations in Minnesota, there is still room to grow. Additionally, in 2024 Unleaded 88 saved consumers over \$25 million at the pump compared to regular 87.

Continued Funding for the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (Page R2)

We appreciate both the House and Senate funding the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program and the Senate for funding it at the full base amount. In 2022, a first of its kind grant program was authorized as a pilot at the MN Department of Agriculture to offer grants to farmers to purchase equipment to aid in soil health practice adoption. In the past as Minnesota farmers have worked to implement practices on their farms they have utilized federal and state cost-share programs. While cost-share programs and programs that allow farmers to rent equipment were helpful for early adopters, it is our stance that programs that encourage ownership of equipment to begin utilizing soil health practices long term, is the best path forward to see widespread adoption of soil health practices across the state. The Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant Program does that by providing down payment assistance on equipment.

Expanding the types of financial assistance can help to de-risk new practice adoption for Minnesota farmers. A lot of attention has been given to cover crops or reduced tillage, which are important and are

a component of what this programs looks to accomplish, but the use and management of manure, precision agriculture, crop rotations and grazing management should not be overlooked as beneficial practices for soil health. A broad definition of soil health and eligible practices ensures that state soil health initiatives will not be limited to a one-size fits all approach, but will instead help support farmers in different parts of the state to implement practices that work best for their individual farm operations.

Since the pilot program was passed the response to the program by Minnesota farmers has been overwhelming with over \$24,500,000 in requests compared to the \$5,250,000 that has been made available through general and clean water funds. In the 3 years that the grant program has existed, it has had an impact on over 320,000 acres.

In addition, MCGA also supports the following Provisions:

- Agriculture, Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer -AGREETT (Page R22)
- Mental health and farm safety outreach and support (Page R6)
- Restricted Use Pesticide Plan Update (Page R6, House Side)

We look forward to working with the conference committee as they move forward. If you or your staff have any questions, please feel free to reach out to MCGA's Senior Public Policy Director Amanda Bilek at 952-460-3612 or [atrunnell@mncorn.org](mailto:atrunnell@mncorn.org). We are always happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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

Jim Kanten  
President  
Minnesota Corn Growers Association