

## Ensuring Affordable and Accessible Care in Rural Minnesota

**Whereas** access to affordable care—from the beginning of life until the end of life—is fundamental to economic opportunity, vibrant communities, and the persistence of the family farm.

**Whereas** healthcare is too expensive, and this hits family farmers hard, pushing spouses to seek off-farm employment, leading families to shoulder risk by forgoing care, and narrowing opportunities for the next generation.

**Whereas** the voices of Minnesota Farmers Union members helped authorize a MinnesotaCare Public Option, pass a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, and enact meaningful checks on large hospital mergers during the 2023 legislative session.

**Now therefore be it resolved** that MFU calls on policymakers to build on their work to control healthcare costs for farmers, businesses, rural residents, and others across the state, including through:

- 1) Implementing a strong, affordable Public Option that will allow farmers and other self-employed people to 'buy in' to the state's MinnesotaCare program at affordable rates.
- 2) Structuring current and future programs in a way that creates a path toward universal, single-payer healthcare.
- 3) Using public programs to negotiate the price of prescription drugs, prevent price gouging, and prescription affordability and availability regardless of insurance coverage.
- 4) Opposing cuts to or privatization of Medicare.

**And whereas** care is not only expensive but access to care in rural communities is being narrowed as healthcare facilities close or consolidate or services are eliminated.

**Be it further resolved** that MFU calls for action to improve access to care in rural areas, including through:

- 1) Supporting rural care providers—including those in home healthcare—through funding, training, increasing reimbursement rates, and otherwise improving their wages.
- 2) Increasing Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates for rural care providers.
- 3) Strengthening existing or creating new tools to prevent further consolidation of healthcare entities and services.

**And whereas** the cost of childcare has skyrocketed just as severe shortages of providers span 80 counties across the state.

**And whereas** lack of affordable childcare makes it harder for young families to farm, remain in the workforce, and build a life in rural Minnesota.

**Be it further resolved** that MFU calls on policymakers to ensure that every community can access quality affordable childcare, including through cost sharing for families, state bonding for facilities, and financial assistance for new daycares.