January 23, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

Congratulations on your successful inauguration and the beginning of your presidency. A new administration represents a chance for our country to chart a new course. As last fall’s election results made clear, Americans are ready for change. The same is true here in Minnesota.

As you know, the previous administration routinely intruded on state-level decisions, oftentimes to the detriment of hardworking Minnesotans. While the examples are numerous, two areas are of urgent concern: Obamacare destroyed Minnesota’s once nation-leading health care system and the Obama administration has interfered in our ability to responsibly develop our state’s abundant natural resources to help grow jobs and expand the economy.

The Minnesota House Republican Caucus stands ready to work in partnership with your administration to reverse the harmful policies inflicted by the previous administration. In that effort, we respectfully request action on the following priorities we feel deserve immediate attention.

**Expand Access to Affordable Health Care Options**

- **Extend the open enrollment period:** The individual market has been in a state of extreme turbulence due to Obamacare, our state-based exchange, MNsure, and the Minnesota Department of Commerce's decision to permit enrollment caps for 2017. Minnesotans only have until January 31, 2017 to enroll in a health insurance plan through the individual market. Minnesota previously applied for an extension, but was denied by the Obama Administration. If your administration grants our state an extension, Minnesotans will have more time to assess their options and sign up for plans that best suit their families.

- **Grant waiver allowing Minnesota to better manage risk:** Minnesota's once nation-leading health care system has been brought to the brink of collapse thanks to the disastrous consequences of Obamacare. As you’ve previously noted, Democratic Governor Mark Dayton recently declared, “The reality is the Affordable Care Act is no longer affordable.” MNsure and Obamacare put an end to Minnesota's successful Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association program—a high-risk pool that ensured every Minnesotan could obtain needed coverage, and stabilized the individual market while keeping costs down for everyone. Minnesota is seeking the authority to re-establish a program that will bring balance and stability back to our individual insurance market. We urge your administration to grant a waiver and support Congressional action to give states the freedom and flexibility to adopt solutions to fix our health care crisis.
• **Grant waiver from federal penalties for distressed counties:** Thousands of Minnesotans live in counties with just one uncapped plan option, and thousands more do not have access to a plan on the exchange that would allow them to keep their doctor. House Republicans want to give Minnesotans as many options as possible to find an affordable plan that ensures continued care from doctors and specialists. Minnesotans who have no uncapped options should not be penalized for buying a non-qualifying health plan if the only option is too expensive to reasonably afford.

• **Enhance scrutiny of federal funding for state-based exchanges:** MNsure has cost state and federal taxpayers more than $400 million since its inception. Promises that the exchange would be self-sufficient have failed to materialize. As a result, MNsure has relied heavily on Medicaid funding to subsidize operational costs and IT development. Similarly, MNsure has also utilized no-cost extensions of federal exchange establishment grant funding well-past their original expiration date. The Obama administration repeatedly granted these extensions to prop up failing exchanges like MNsure—we believe it's time to put an end to this outrageous waste of taxpayer dollars.

**Responsibly Develop our Natural Resources**

• **Reverse Obama Administration’s actions to block mining:** Shortly before leaving office, President Obama’s U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management moved to withdraw more than 230,000 acres of federal land in Northeast Minnesota from future leasing, exploration, and development. This arbitrary decision is blocking the advance of mining projects that could bring thousands of good-paying jobs and revitalize a region with an unemployment rate higher than the state and national average.

• **Dismiss petition aimed at blocking mining projects:** A petition brought to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by an environmental group seeking to block new mining projects in Minnesota would, if granted, reverse delegation of enforcement for water quality standards by the EPA to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Delegation to the MPCA allows Minnesota regulators to be held accountable to Minnesota legislators and the public—reverting authority to the EPA would have the effect of slowing down environmental review, potentially delaying key mining projects.

• **Support Congressional action on gray wolves:** Rising wolf populations in Northern Minnesota have proven devastating for cattle ranchers and other Minnesota animal farmers. We support Congressional action to remove the gray wolf from the Endangered Species List so farmers are able to protect their livestock and animals and keep local wolf populations in check.

While this list is not exhaustive, we believe the priorities listed above are critical steps the executive branch can take in the short-term to alleviate the past eight years of over-burdensome federal government intrusion. We look forward to working with your administration to advance the prosperity and success of Minnesotans. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kurt Daudt
Speaker of the House
Minnesota House of Representatives