February 11, 2021

To: State Rep. Holly Brink, Chair
        House Government Oversight Committee

From: State Rep. Chuck Isenhart
        Member, House Government Oversight Committee

Copy: State Rep. Ruth Ann Gaines, Ranking Member
        House Government Oversight Committee

About: Oversight of Animal Feeding Operations
        Department of Natural Resources

Dear Rep. Brink:

I urge you to convene the House Government Oversight Committee to review the regulation of animal feeding operations by the Department of Natural Resources, including a review of Chapter 459 of the Iowa Code.

In a recent interview with the Cedar Rapids Gazette, Speaker Grassley suggested that a "sit-down conversation that can be a real" could identify "some issues that need to be addressed."

Newspaper and other reports in the past indicated that members of the Environmental Protection Commission expressed interest in reviewing standards for animal feeding operations. In 2017, however, the Commission as a whole found a "presumption of legislative acceptance" of the department's and commission's implementation of the matrix because the General Assembly has not revisited the statute. A review by the Government Oversight Committee will serve to evaluate the performance and results of this regulatory system, as well as recommend changes that may be necessary.

As part of the review, I request that the Government Oversight Committee invite the Commission, the Department, the State Soil Conservation and Water Quality Committee, the Conservation Districts of Iowa and other stakeholder groups – including producer groups and scientists who have conducted research into these matters -- for their input and to seek their recommendations for any changes to Chapter 459 that may be advisable.

An inquiry into the state's experience in the application of the master matrix for concentrated and confined feeding operations should also include the experience of local governments, landowners and communities.

I thank you for your careful consideration and timely response to this request.