



April 14, 2021

*Members of the Minnesota Senate*

Re: **SF 972 – Omnibus Commerce and Energy Bill**

Dear Senator,

On behalf of our coalition of more than 70 environmental and conservations organizations and the Minnesota residents we collectively represent, thank you for your hard work as a member of the legislature and your attention to our natural environment and the current and future generations who depend on it.

The world's scientists told us in the 2018 International Panel on Climate Change report that we are on a short timeline for reducing our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: we have only 9 years to achieve a 45% reduction by 2030, and then only an additional 20 years to achieve zero emissions by 2050.

So far, Minnesota has not adopted the policies needed to put us on a trajectory that could meet corresponding benchmarks or achieve these goals. In fact, the most recent report from the MPCA shows that we are going backwards.

While this bill makes some positive steps forward, it fails to meet the demands of our moment and falls short of doing what Minnesota must do to tackle climate change.

There are several positive items in this bill. We are especially pleased to see investments for:

- Solar on Schools (\$8 million)
- Clean Energy Career Training (\$2.5 million)
- State building efficiency revolving loan program (\$5 million)

These investments in our future will repay us exponentially in savings through reduced energy costs and better opportunity and capacity to equitably build our clean future. We strongly support them.

We also support the PUC lifecycle carbon accounting framework and cost-benefit test for innovative resources provision. This will be important information for guiding Minnesota's investments in our collective energy foundation.

We would also like to raise serious concerns about two policy provisions:

## **Article 5 - Section 10: Natural Gas Innovation Act**

The language around the Natural Gas Innovation Act raises several concerns. As written, the NGIA:

- Lacks goals to decarbonize the natural gas sector of our economy. Putting the right goals into statute motivates the right action. Climate scientists tell us that we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% in the next 9 years, and achieve zero emissions by 2050.
- Prioritizes renewable natural gas and other pipeline-based fuels over other existing and more impactful decarbonization solutions. When our state is so behind in meeting greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, every year matters and investments should be focused on the technologies that make can take us to our end goal: zero emissions.
- Builds an unhealthy foundation on manure lagoons to produce renewable natural gas. Manure lagoons from confined feed-lot operations create significant issues for water and air quality in communities across Minnesota. Using manure as a renewable fuel source disregards the inherent environmental harms that manure lagoons produce and this technology would not mitigate the water, land, and air pollution that negatively impacts communities across our state. We should seek to avoid this type of industrial farming and pollution through more sustainable agricultural and energy processes, instead of utilizing the pollution from confined feed-lot operations as a feedstock in clean energy policy.

## **Article 5 - Section 12: Repeal of Certificate of Need for New Nuclear Facilities**

In 1994, the Minnesota legislature enacted a moratorium on building new nuclear facilities as part of an agreement allowing Northern States Power (now Xcel Energy) to store dry casks of high level nuclear waste at its Prairie Island nuclear facility. In the 27 years that have passed since the moratorium was enacted, neither Minnesota, nor the country as a whole, has found a long-term storage solution for the toxic nuclear waste produced from this form of energy. And indeed, the temporary storage facilities around the country, often near bodies of water, are at growing risk of damage from the increased frequency of extreme weather events resulting from climate change.

While we appreciate that nuclear energy has and continues to play an important role in providing energy in Minnesota without emitting carbon, it is not acceptable to address one environmental crisis with methods that create another risk -- shouldered especially by nearby communities -- when better options are available. The best path forward is not to create more risk with nuclear energy, but to focus on the renewable solutions that will build the long-term safety and security we deserve.

While stark, the climate goals we face need not be feared. Embracing them will give us cleaner air, water and land. The equitable clean energy future is waiting and need only be chosen.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse  
Executive Director