



May 4, 2022

Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

Re: SF4091 – Omnibus Climate and Energy, Commerce, Higher Education, Labor and Industry, and Workforce and Business Development Supplemental Finance and Policy Bill

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Omnibus climate and energy, commerce, higher education, labor and industry, and workforce and business development supplemental finance and policy bill, SF4091. Our comments are referencing the climate and energy provisions contained in HF 4355, 2nd Engrossment. We greatly appreciate the many good provisions and significant investments made in this bill that will improve Minnesotans' quality of life and bolster our fight against climate change.

We would like to highlight some key provisions in this bill that will advance climate action, support lower energy bills and more economic opportunities for Minnesotans, and support equity in our communities.

First, this bill invests heavily in bringing solar power to public facilities, homes, and institutions. Solar power is increasingly inexpensive and viable in every part of the state. These investments will support good jobs and provide communities with reduced energy costs.

- The bill invests \$3 million from the General Fund for the Solar on Schools Grant Program to stimulate the installation of solar energy systems on Minnesota public schools (outside of Xcel territory) while using the opportunity to integrate renewable energy use into school curriculum. Art. 16, Sec. 2, ppg (e)
- The bill establishes a Solar Grant Program for public buildings that will award grants to local units of government or municipal electric utilities that install solar energy generating systems on public buildings. The bill invests a total of \$8 million - \$4 million from the General Fund and \$4 million from the Renewable Development Account - in initial funding for this program. Art. 16, Sec. 2, ppg (a) and Art. 17, Sec. 2, ppg (i)
- The bill invests \$4 million from the Renewable Development Account to establish a pilot program for awarding grants to owners of single-family and multifamily homes to upgrade electrical panels to advance electrification. Art. 17, Sec. 2, ppg (b)
- The bill restores reductions in the financial incentive through the Xcel Energy Solar Rewards program for customers to install solar energy generating systems on their homes. The bill invests an additional \$5 million from the Renewable Development

Account in FY 2023 and 2024 and ongoing base funding of \$10 million in 2025. Art. 17, Sec 2, ppg (g)

- This bill removes barriers that prevent Minnesotans that live and own homes in homeowner associations from installing rooftop solar systems on their homes. Around one-quarter of Minnesotans live in one of the over 7,700 HOAs. This will increase the growth of rooftop solar in the state, as well as reduce energy bills and increase the value of people's homes. Art. 21, Sec. 11
- This bill invests \$4 million from the Renewable Development Account to create a new solar battery incentive program in the Xcel territory to help people that add batteries to their solar arrays. Art. 17, Sec. 2, ppg (h)

Second, this bill invests in electric vehicle charging infrastructure that will play a crucial role in supporting the adoption of EVs in Minnesota. Vehicle electrification is a crucial part of reducing Minnesota's transportation emissions and improving air quality.

- The bill invests a total of \$1 million - \$500,000 from the General Fund and \$500,000 from the Renewable Development Account - to install a network of electric vehicle charging stations in public parking facilities in county government centers. Art. 16, Sec 2, ppg (h) and Art. 17, Sec 2, ppg (f).
- The bill invests \$4.1 million to install electric vehicle charging stations in public parking facilities located in state and regional parks. Art. 16, Sec. 7
- The bill invests \$2.1 million to install electric vehicle charging stations at highway safety rest areas. Art. 16, Sec. 7, ppg (a)
- The bill provides \$133,000 to enable modification of the State Building Code to address needs for electric vehicle charging in parking facilities in new commercial and multifamily buildings that provide on-site parking. Art. 16, Sec. 8, ppg (a)
- The bill invests \$3 million for Metropolitan Council to purchase EV buses, a critical boost to Metro Transit's work to electrify its bus fleet. Art. 17, Sec. 3

Third, the bill invests in weatherization for Minnesota homes. Buildings are one of the largest and most challenging sectors for carbon emissions and improving weatherization will help to sharply cut those emissions and save Minnesotans money on their energy bills, especially benefitting lower income communities by making their homes more energy-efficient and safe.

- The bill invests \$30 million in one-time dollars to provide grants to community action agencies and other agencies to weatherize residences and to install preweatherization measures in residential buildings occupied by eligible low-income households. We are especially pleased to see that this investment will be ongoing with a base of \$15 million. Art. 16, Sec. 2, ppg (b)

Fourth, the bill invests a total of \$20 million in Minnesota's competitiveness account, a funding vehicle that enables the state to leverage federal dollars for clean energy projects, and short-term capacity needs to help businesses, the state and disadvantaged communities across Minnesota to compete for the opportunities created by this law.

- The bill includes \$10 million in General Fund dollars to the state competitiveness account to leverage federal formula and competitive funds for energy-related infrastructure and clean energy investments in Minnesota. Art. 16, Sec. 2, ppg (f)
- The bill includes \$10 million in Renewable Development Fund dollars for similar investments, which must specifically benefit customers of Xcel Energy or the Prairie Island Indian Community or its members - the latter of whom bear the burden of nuclear waste storage on their land. Art. 17, Sec. 2, ppg (j)

Fifth, this bill helps to advance equity by providing clean energy training for people of color, immigrant communities, and low-income people that are unemployed or underemployed.

- This bill invests \$500,000 for a grant to Unidos MN Education Fund and New Justice Project MN to address employment and economic disparities for people of color, immigrant communities, and low-income unemployed or underemployed individuals. This funding will support preapprenticeship and workforce training, career development, worker rights training, employment placement and entrepreneurship support, related support services, and the development of transferable skills in high-demand fields related to construction, clean energy, and energy efficiency. Article 16 Sec. 4, ppg (a)

We thank you for your leadership and for your consideration. At this critical moment for Minnesota's climate and economy, we are excited by the prospect that these investments will soon support a brighter energy future, good-paying jobs, and reduced pollution and power bills for Minnesotans. We look forward to working with you to support these programs.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:

A.C.E.S. (Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability)

Cooperative Energy Futures*

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Hastings Environmental Protectors

Land Stewardship Project

League of Women Voters

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

MN350

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Renewing the Countryside

Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Solar United Neighbors

Vote Climate

**denotes non-MEP member*