

April 6, 2021

Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen
Chair, Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee
3207 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Comments on S.F. 959, Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Ingebrigtsen,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties formed to address waste management and energy issues. We seek to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate. We would like to articulate support and appreciation for several provisions in S.F. 959, as well as raise concerns that we hope will result in a bill that will work even better for Minnesota.

SCORE Funding Increase

The Partnership strongly supports providing counties across the state additional resources to bring to bear on reducing, reusing and recycling waste, consistent with state goals and policy in the Waste Management Act. A proposed increase from current funding levels to \$20.55 million for FY 2022 and 2023 will translate into more diversion of valuable resources from landfills in the state, more jobs in manufacturing and other sectors and reduced greenhouse gases by moving towards a more circular economy. This proposal lays the groundwork for higher levels of on-going funding to give counties the resources they need to meet waste reduction and recycling goals in state law, including the very ambitious goal of 75% recycling by 2030 for metro area counties.

Mattress Recycling

The Partnership strongly supports the concept of product stewardship for mattresses. The provisions related to mattress recycling represent an important step in creating a producer-led product stewardship system for this purpose. We support the creation of a mattress collection network to provide benefits such as diversion from disposal, job creation and greenhouse gas reduction through recycling.

We see this bill as a framework to build a product stewardship approach that can achieve high recycling rates for mattresses, fully address the cost to local government for collection and management and solve logistical challenges at solid waste facilities. We support including the following criteria in the bill to create a more robust mattress stewardship effort in Minnesota,

reducing the life cycle impacts of mattresses and the burdens faced by local government and Minnesota residents in dealing with discarded mattresses.

- Clarify that local governments will not face costs to participate.
- Assure that existing mattress recyclers and processors in the state will not be negatively affected by the design and funding mechanisms of the council's program.
- Establish minimum recycling goals, based on the experience of programs in other states.
- Reduce the minimum mattress count that a covered entity must accumulate in order to participate.
- Include local government in the program design and operations.
- Consider mattress renovation and reuse as preferred management strategies under the program.
- Clarify in Subd. 2 (4) that "municipalities" includes all units of local government, such as defining the term per MSS 466.01, subd 1., as it applies to incurring no cost to host storage containers provided under the program.

Recycling Market Development Grant Funding

The Partnership appreciates continued funding for the development of recycling markets in Minnesota, particularly as the significant impact from changes in global trade of recyclable materials continues to transform domestic recycling markets and infrastructure. These wise investments in Minnesota's recycling economy will increase manufacturing jobs, strengthen and stabilize municipal and business recycling programs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by keeping more materials in the state instead of shipping to distant markets.

Food Rescue, Food Waste Reduction and Organics Diversion Funding

The Partnership appreciates continued funding for efforts to rescue more edible food before it becomes waste, to prevent food waste, to reduce barriers to collecting and recovering organic waste and to divert organics to higher and better uses than waste-to-energy facilities and landfills. Over 25% of the trash stream is food and other organic materials that must be prioritized for recovery to meet ambitious recycling goals and realize significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the waste stream.

Environmental Trust Fund Projects

Community Forests Infected by Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

The Partnership strongly supports funding to communities bracing for the growing expense of the emerald ash borer (EAB) infestation, which is now identified in at least 27 Minnesota counties and continues to spread. Grants to communities to manage EAB and restore urban canopy are critically needed as we approach the peak years of this threat.

EAB Impacts in Black Ash Forests

The Partnership supports the grant to the University of Minnesota to study the statewide impacts of EAB on water, vegetation and wildlife. This is particularly urgent in North Central Minnesota where millions of black ash trees that soon be in the path of the EAB.

Food Rescue for Greenhouse Gas Reduction

The Partnership supports providing funding to Second Harvest Heartland, a partner to member counties in the fight against food waste. This provision has the added benefits of making more food available for those in need and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food that otherwise would decompose in landfills.

Eco-Friendly Plastics from Lignin

The Partnership supports the appropriation for the development of eco-friendly plastics from lignin produced at the Cloquet Pulp Mill. This alternative material will lead to products which remain stable while in the marketplace but which degrade much more rapidly following their use.

Jobs Through Waste Diversion and Reuse

The Partnership is particularly excited to see funding for projects focused on reuse of household goods, building materials and other products. The project with Better Futures Minnesota and the Natural Resources Research Institute is a significant strategy to avoid losing valuable resources and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from what would otherwise be waste from remodeling, construction and demolition activities. This effort will concurrently provide valuable opportunities for individuals who otherwise face barriers in securing stable, good paying jobs. Likewise, funding for ReUSE Minnesota advances an important strategy to reduce waste, keep materials in use and support job growth in established and emerging reuse businesses and non-profit organizations.

PFAS

The Partnership supports funding to help landfills and compost facilities develop strategies to manage PFAS in land-applied biosolids and to work with the private waste industry to demonstrate the potential for innovative technologies to address PFAS from point sources such as landfills.

Advanced Recycling

The Partnership supports the concept of using new and emerging technologies to increase the recycling of plastic waste, recognizing the need for commiserate efforts to reduce the volume of plastic waste.

Reducing Sources of PFAS in Solid Waste Facilities

The Partnership supports funding an initiative to reduce sources of PFAS that show up in wastewater treatment and solid waste facilities. The Partnership is pleased to be included in the advisory group supporting the work of the state agencies and others to create this initiative.

Unadopted Rules

The Partnership strongly recommends against adopting Section 118 of the omnibus bill. We believe this provision would create barriers for efficient, orderly and effective implementation of state environmental policy, goals and laws and would have unintended consequences for public health and environmental protection in the state. Among the many significant impacts we are concerned about are significant delays and obstacles in creating and implementing solid waste plans, unnecessary impediments to publishing needed public information resources on critical

programs and services, delays in updating solid waste programs intended to meet statutory requirements and increased costs to counties.

Compostable Products

The Partnership strongly encourages the committee include provisions in the bill to amend current law on compostable products. For example, S.F. 2243 contains language the Partnership strongly supports. The approach in this bill would expand the current compostable plastic bag labeling standards law to all food or beverage products and packaging, establish science-based certification requirements for compostability claims and require clear identification of products claiming to be certified as compostable.

This would be an important step toward achieving the sustainable organics recycling system that is necessary for reaching the 75% recycling goal required of the metro area counties. We believe such an approach would be valuable in multiple ways, including the following.

- Give consumers, food establishments and others confidence about which products are truly compostable and can be diverted from trash for composting.
- Increase the volume of organic wastes that will be diverted for composting and other organics management technologies, such as anaerobic digestion.
- Provide more assurance that organic material delivered to compost sites is clean and ready to compost.
- Help compost sites cost-effectively produce quality compost and increase marketability for use in landscaping, road construction and gardens. This is the key to closing the loop on organics recycling.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Partnership's positions on S.F. 959. We encourage passage of those provisions that best advance local government efforts in achieving state public health and environmental protection goals in partnership with the state, municipalities, businesses and non-private organizations.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

cc: Megan Hennen, Committee Administrator
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County