

April 6, 2021

Representative Jamie Long
Chair, House Climate & Energy Finance & Policy Committee
517 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for H.F. 2110—Omnibus Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Bill

Dear Chair Long:

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, which often intersect. We are expressing our strong support for two provisions of H.F. 2110 related to renewable natural gas and the power purchase agreement (PPA) between Xcel Energy and District Energy St. Paul. We have concerns with the treatment of waste-to-energy for solid waste management in the bill and believe there is opportunity to coalesce around climate strategies that achieve mutual goals.

Renewable Natural Gas

The Partnership strongly supports the provisions related to renewable natural gas in Article 2, Section 32 of H.F. 2110 and urges approval of this initiative. The development of a stable and reliable market for renewable natural gas is an important step to develop the infrastructure to recycle organics, such as food waste. This is a key priority for the Partnership.

Recycling of food and other organics, over 25% of our trash, will be necessary if metropolitan counties are expected to achieve the 75% recycling goal by 2030 as established in state law. Organics recycling programs are in the early stages of development. A key limiting factor is available infrastructure to process the organics into beneficial products.

Anaerobic digestion (also known as AD) is emerging as a valuable option to increase organics processing in Minnesota. While composting and AD both result in a beneficial soil amendment, AD has the added benefit of producing biogas. This biogas can be converted to various forms of clean, renewable energy, including renewable natural gas.

An objective of the natural gas innovation proposal is to provide a framework within which natural gas utilities can bring renewable natural gas into the marketplace. The Partnership believes this initiative will increase demand for renewable natural gas and create a stronger, more stable marketplace. Furthermore, policies that support the conversion of organics into biogas could substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts of waste by tapping a readily-available renewable energy source and reducing the state's reliance on fossil fuels.

Future Fuels

The Partnership supports the Future Fuels provisions in Article 3, Section 3 of H.F. 2110 which

establishes a technology and fuel neutral approach to decarbonizing transportation fuels in Minnesota in a way that's good for our people, environment and economy.

As noted above related to renewable natural gas, recycling organics waste, primarily food waste, will be necessary if metropolitan counties are expected to achieve statutory recycling goals. And as anaerobic digestion (AD) can produce biogas for production of renewable natural gas, it can also be used to produce another form of clean, renewable energy – carbon negative transportation fuels.

We believe the Future Fuels Act will be another force for developing strong, reliable markets for biogas, supporting the development of much needed infrastructure to better manage organic waste in ways that capture its maximum resource value and substantially reduce the climate impacts of waste.

Xcel-District Energy Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)

Article 6, Section 11 of H.F. 2110 provides for an extension of the PPA between Xcel Energy and St. Paul District Energy. We strongly support this extension and see it as necessary to help manage wood waste.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is now identified in 26 Minnesota counties and continues to spread. Communities are removing and replacing ash trees as quickly as they can to slow the spread of EAB. The surge in waste ash wood being generated as we battle EAB is overwhelming our capability to properly manage it. This challenge is one of the urgent concerns of the Partnership.

While the Partnership supports the multi-faceted response outlined in the EQB [2019 Emerald Ash Borer in Minnesota Report](#), we recognize that the steps that need to be taken are rolling out too slowly or are on hold for want of resources. We urge the state to ramp up funding and prepare a collaborative statewide EAB plan. In the meantime, we must do something with the growing volumes of wood waste.

Wood waste cannot be landfilled, nor can we open burn it. Our only practical outlet has been to provide wood as a fuel for the St. Paul District Energy facility. It is essential that the PPA between Xcel and St. Paul District Energy be extended to allow additional time to use waste wood responsibly.

We understand that the extension of the PPA is short-term. Nonetheless, we support this extension as an important part of our current best practices for managing waste wood.

Eligible Energy Technologies

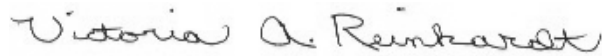
The Partnership supports the eligibility of technologies that recover energy from waste in the state's long-standing renewable energy statutes and opposes singling out individual facilities that operate in good standing with all state and federal permits. We support moving toward a substantially fossil-free and carbon-free electric grid in the timeframe the committee suggests and encourage the committee not conflate state waste management policy goals with energy policy in ways that may lead the state in a direction that is neither fiscally nor environmentally sound.

RE: Support for H.F. 2110

While the Partnership strongly supports efforts to substantially redirect state waste policy and resources towards achieving zero waste, waste-to-energy is the only type of power generation that can result in a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by mitigating methane emissions from landfills. The Partnership seeks to work with legislators to achieve mutual goals of sound solid waste management that achieves environmental and health outcomes, and the adoption of greenhouse gas reduction goals that achieves carbon neutrality in Minnesota. The Partnership believes that integrating energy and materials management strategies to reach beyond current goals, policies and structures will achieve a more sustainable economy without waste, reduce greenhouse gases and improve other environmental outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Partnership's concerns for these provisions in H.F. 2110. We strongly encourage passage to give the region and the state more tools to achieve statutory recycling and waste diversion goals, continue proper management of waste wood created by the EAB infestation and substantially reduce the climate impacts of waste.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Victoria A. Reinhardt".

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

cc: Mike Molzahn, Committee Administrator
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County