

March 28, 2023

Representative Rick Hansen
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: H.F. 2310, Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Hansen,

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. The Partnership seeks 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.

The Partnership appreciates the opportunity to express support for several provisions of H.F. 2310 that will have significant impact on protecting public health and the environment and help counties and communities be more successful in reaching challenging statutory waste management goals.

Priority Provisions

The Partnership highlights these provisions as priorities for full funding.

- *Responding to emerald ash borer (EAB)*. Significant funding is long overdue for multiple responses needed to address this ongoing threat to 1/5 of the state's community forests. The Partnership strongly supports the following.
 - *St. Paul Cogeneration*: State support for this facility currently handling 2/3 of the region's wood waste. The Partnership appreciates the proposed grant appropriation as a major step in preserving this critical resource. We encourage the full \$35 million appropriation included in H.F. 2831 to avoid cost disincentives that could lead to hazards created by stockpiling or open burning of wood waste.
 - *Koda Energy*: Grant for \$4 million to purchase wood dehydrating equipment at this biomass facility in Shakopee to significantly expand the company's capacity to efficiently capture energy from wood waste.
 - *EAB Response grants to local governments, the DNR ReLeaf Program and Met Council grants for parks systems*: Grant programs to offer a range of assistance that strapped communities need now for treatment, removal and replacement of ash trees as EAB destroys community forests and urban canopy in a growing number of counties (40 and counting).
- *SCORE grant funding*. Maintaining and building on baseline funding is foundational to support waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting efforts in the state and assist counties in meeting state mandates.

- *Food waste reduction, food rescue, and organics recovery.* Ambitious state recycling mandates will not be met without addressing the biggest component of our trash stream—food waste and other organic materials. Grants to businesses, non-profits and local government are one important tool in this effort.
- *Waste prevention and reduction grants and loans.* The grant and loan programs presented in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s budget proposal will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make important contributions in achieving state waste management goals. We support these resources needed to address food waste, expand the impact of recycling and compost market development efforts, reduce landfilling of materials from our built environment, support a variety of other waste prevention, reuse and recycling activities by counties and our partners in the community, and develop higher and better uses for tree waste—a critical need given the exponential increasing numbers of infected trees in the coming decades.

The Partnership also strongly supports the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s request for additional staffing to address backlogs in solid waste permitting. Our counties are pursuing innovative and emerging solutions to meet the state’s waste management mandates. For example, our counties are putting significant resources into developing anaerobic digestion facilities that will significantly reduce disposal of food waste and other organic waste in landfills and waste-to-energy facilities. We need a strong partnership with the Agency as these and other facilities are developed. Long delays risk project viability and missed federal grant opportunities for necessary projects.

Other Provisions to Support

The Partnership also supports several other provisions in H.F. 2310.

- Repaying the Metropolitan Landfill Contingency Action Trust account (full \$29.055 million appropriation) and funding of the Pig’s Eye Landfill Task Force to address remediation of ongoing problems created by landfills.
- Implementing standards and labeling requirements for compostable products and packaging, critical for achieving sustainable organics recycling to meet state recycling mandates.
- Establishing a zero-waste grant program. We encourage continued efforts to refine certain provisions, including reliance on an agency-determined definition of zero waste, to enhance the impact of the grant program and assure language leads to effective policy on landfill diversion and zero-waste efforts.
- Funding a study and report that includes a pathway to achieve zero waste. We encourage continued efforts to assure the process and product reflect the waste management hierarchy in state law with an objective and full examination of the range of considerations involved in moving the state closer to a zero-waste outcome.
- Maintaining recycling market development grants that build capacity within the state to make products out of materials collected in the state’s recycling programs.
- Implementing Minnesota’s PFAS Blueprint, PFAS reduction grants and other provisions that encourage transparency and re-examination of product design to reduce PFAS.
- Funding small business loans and grants for pollution prevention and emission reductions.
- Funding agencies’ responsibilities related to chemicals of concern in children’s and other products and PFAS in food packaging.

RE: Support for H.F. 2310, Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill

- Updating statutes related to lead and cadmium in products and addressing trichloroethylene (TCE) use.
- Maintaining Local Recycling Development Grant (LRDG) to metro counties.
- Updating the state's product stewardship statutes for paint (PaintCare program).
- Advancing efforts to define and advance environmental justice in permitting and enforcement activities, examine cumulative impacts and engage with communities and community members in the permitting process. We encourage continued dialog among interested parties to balance a range of interests and concerns.
- Completing a solar equipment recycling and reuse report.
- Instructing the revisors office to change statutory language to no longer reference "master plans" in describing waste management plans in M.S.S. 473.803 to 473.8441.
- Funding LCCMR pilot projects for furniture and mattress recycling and for producing biochar from wood waste.
- Funding a lead tackle reduction program to keep this heavy metal from polluting our land and water and reduce the burden on county collection programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Partnership's positions on H.F. 2310. We stand ready to work together on these important issues for the benefit of our communities and the state.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

cc: House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee members