

March 21, 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. 2831 (Emerald Ash Borer response grant program)

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 thanks Representative Finke for introducing H.F. 2831. We strongly support its passage to maintain the capacity of District Energy's St. Paul Cogeneration facility to use wood waste as a biomass energy source, and to assist burdened communities with the cost of managing the surge of wood waste created by the emerald ash borer infestation in the state.

The state requires a range of solutions to respond to the emerald ash borer (EAB) infestation that is now identified in 38 Minnesota counties and continues to spread. Communities are removing and replacing ash trees to slow the spread of EAB as quickly as funding allows. Adequate capacity does not exist to properly manage the surge of waste wood created as counties, cities, private landowners and others battle EAB in the many years to come.

State support is needed now to allow St. Paul Cogeneration facility to continue to capture the energy value of wood waste, rather than losing this resource to open burn piles that threaten air quality and public health. It is a priority that we do not lose the capacity St. Paul Cogeneration offers at this time.

The Partnership stands ready to work with you, your committee members, state agencies, communities and the private sector to pursue the multitude of solutions needed to respond to EAB and manage the resulting wood waste. We encourage the committee to act favorably on H.F. 2831 and to take urgently necessary legislative action this session to provide additional critically needed solutions to manage this decades-long wood waste challenge brought about by EAB.

Sincerely,



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

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

PARTNERSHIP ON WASTE AND ENERGY
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