

March 29, 2023

Senator Foug Hawj
Chair, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: S.F. 2438, Environment and Climate Budget Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Hawj,

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 S.F. 2438 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.

- *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. The Partnership appreciates the appropriation of additional SCORE funding in FY2024-27 and encourages increasing the figure for 2024-25 to match the Governor's budget proposal of \$4 million per year for this purpose.
- *Repaying the Metropolitan Landfill Contingency Action Trust.* The Partnership appreciates the appropriation of \$12 million as an important step towards repaying a portion of the funds borrowed from this account to balance past general fund budgets. It falls short of full repayment and does not address lost investment income. The Partnership urges full repayment of \$29.055 million as requested in S.F. 440.
- *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 exponentially increasing numbers of trees that will be infected by emerald ash borer (EAB) in the coming decades.

The Partnership also strongly supports full funding for 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.

Responding to Emerald Ash Borer

As outlined in the joint Senate-House Environment committee hearing on emerald ash borer earlier this session, significant funding is long overdue for multiple responses needed to address this ongoing threat to 1/5 of the state's community forests. State support is critically needed now to maintain the ability of St. Paul Cogeneration facility to continue to handle 2/3 of the region's wood waste. No other capacity is currently available in the region to absorb this volume of material should this facility not remain viable. Also, strapped communities need a range of assistance 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).

The Partnership strongly supports including and fully funding the EAB Response program as requested in S.F. 2973 to provide grants to St. Paul Cogeneration and local governments as this bill moves forward.

Other Provisions We Support

The Partnership supports several other provisions in S.F. 2438.

- Expanding project eligibility and increasing funding limits under the MPCA's Capital Assistance Projects program.
- 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 agencies' responsibilities related to chemicals of concern in children's and other products and PFAS in food packaging.
- Updating statutes related to lead and cadmium in products and addressing trichloroethylene (TCE) use.
- Funding small business loans and grants for pollution prevention and emission reductions.
- 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

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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.
- Funding for modeling impacts, costs and benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Partnership's positions on S.F. 2438. 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: Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee members