

March 5, 2024

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

**RE: Support for H.F. 3738**

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

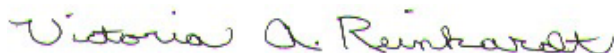
The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, formed to address waste management and energy issues. The Partnership seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate.

The Partnership supports appropriations for Community Tree Planting Grants in H.F. 3738, authored by Rep. Fue Lee, to replace trees lost to forest pests, disease or storm damage and reinvigorate a climate-resilient shade tree canopy in our communities. The Partnership particularly appreciates the priority on removal and replacement of ash trees, and the focus on areas with underserved populations and environmental justice areas designated in state law where some of the greatest need for financial assistance may be found.

Meeting the emerald ash borer (EAB) challenge is one of the Partnership's priorities. Fifty counties—up from 38 counties at this time last year—are now subject to ash quarantines. Thousands of trees are lost annually to EAB. Extreme weather such as drought only exacerbates threats EAB and other pests pose to the state's trees. Local communities face limited financial resources. They need the state to step up to help recover from the compounding impacts on our community forests.

The Partnership thanks Rep. Lee for introducing H.F. 3738 and Chair Hansen for hearing this bill. We encourage the committee to act favorably on the bill to address critical community forestry needs in our communities and create a legacy on our community landscape that will be appreciated by generations to come.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Victoria A. Reinhart, Ramsey County  
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy