



# Association of Minnesota Counties

May 4, 2022

Senator Julie Rosen, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
2113 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: SF4043 – Funding for Low-Income Grants to Replace Failing Septic Systems and Support of the A-5 Amendment to Simplify Fund Administration**

Dear Senator Rosen and Member of the Senate Finance Committee,

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), a membership organization representing all of Minnesota's 87 counties, appreciates the opportunity to share our **support of funding for low-income grants to replace failing septic systems in SF4043** and **encourage your support of the A-5 amendment to simplify the administration of these funds**.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) *2020 Report on Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS)* reviews and analyzes data reported by local governments (including 86 of the 87 counties) that operate SSTS programs. That report indicates there are a total of 618,102 SSTS across Minnesota. Estimates place the number of compliant systems at 81%, which is an improvement from ten years ago when the compliance rate was at 71%. In 2020, 7,183 of the 12,368 construction permits issued were for replacement systems, which shows that we are making progress addressing failing systems.

The resources local governments receive to do compliance work and provide financial assistance to landowners has been very helpful. Replacement of a septic system is a significant and costly endeavor. It is particularly challenging for low-income residents that do not have the resources to pay for a project of this expense. The MPCA low-income grant program funds county-based grant programs that provide grants scalable to the needs of the individual/family. The program has been well received and is straightforward to administer.

We appreciate Senator Westrom bringing this proposal forward, and for supporting an amendment to direct funds through the MPCA program. We encourage the committee to support the A-5 amendment as well. The original language directs funding to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and has different criteria from the current program. The approach of directing the funds through BWSR would unnecessarily complicates the administration of these grants and limits the use of the funds on certain projects.

Despite our successes, data suggests that there are over 100,000 noncompliant systems in need of attention now or in the near future. The funding in this legislation will accelerate the replacement of more systems, thus improving public health and the environment.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions on this issue at 651-246-4156 or [bmartinson@mncounties.org](mailto:bmartinson@mncounties.org).

Sincerely,



Brian Martinson  
Environment and Natural Resources Policy Analyst  
Association of Minnesota Counties