



February 28, 2022

Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen
Chair, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee
3207 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re.: SF2930 / HF3187

Dear Senator Ingebrigtsen and fellow committee members:

On behalf of the City of Paynesville, we submit this letter in support of SF2930 – a bill that would provide invaluable peace of mind to the residents of our City. Our City Administrator, Tariq Al-Rifai, will be present to testify regarding this bill, and we offer this letter as a showing of support by the City Council of this bill.

In the 1990s, the City of Paynesville learned of a petroleum leak at an old fueling station in town. Unknown amounts of leaded gasoline had leaked from one or more underground storage tanks and had infiltrated our city aquifer. Over the next 20+ years, the City worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to fully identify the extent of the problem and work on appropriate methods of remediation. Throughout this process, the City pushed the MPCA for a more aggressive method of remediation and was consistently met with consternation from the MPCA. Several hydrologists eventually supported these aggressive remediation techniques and were swiftly transferred to other projects or left the MPCA entirely.

The City became aware of a lawsuit against the MPCA by a former employee in late 2021. The allegations of that suit, that he was denied advancement opportunities because of his advocacy for greater remediation efforts, resonated with the experience we had. The lawsuit specifically mentioned the City of Paynesville as a site that could have benefited from the types of more aggressive remediation we had fought for but were denied.

Eventually, State funds were appropriated for the construction of a Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) treatment plant, which was constructed in 2015, and new wells were dug away from the contamination site. Because of those efforts, our City drinking water is safe to drink – for now.

Questions remain, however, among some residents and those of us in leadership roles regarding whether additional efforts would be prudent and necessary. The lawsuit breathed a breath of fresh air into those concerns and reignited a local debate about whether the efforts taken by MPCA went far enough to protect the long-term integrity of our water supply.

SF2930 and its House companion, HF3187, seek to quell those concerns by providing appropriate funding for an independent study. The bill would provide invaluable peace of mind to those within our community and within the other communities referenced in the bills.

Water is the single most integral component to life as we know it. Unsafe drinking water poses a myriad of health concerns. And the distribution of safe, clean drinking water is a fundamental component of local governance.

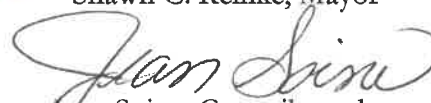
The funding provided in these bills provides the necessary funding so that we as city leaders can verify the safety and integrity of our municipal water supply and fulfill our duties to our constituents. An independent study can provide peace of mind to our residents by verifying the claims of the MPCA – that our water is safe to drink now and in the future. Or, it can provide peace of mind by identifying specifically how we can act *now* to prevent future issues.

Because the benefits of this study are immeasurable, we write to you as a Council to express our unequivocal support of this bill and recommend that the Committee advance the bill.


Thank you.



Shawn C. Reinke, Mayor

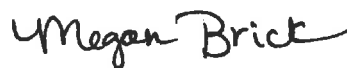


Jean Soine, Councilmember



Neil Herzberg, Councilmember

Megan Brick, Councilmember



Paul Thielen, Councilmember



Cc. Sen. Jeff Howe
Rep. Lisa Demuth