

Dear State Senators on the Government Finance and Policy and Elections Senate Committee:

I recently sent the following letter to the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Committee for their hearing regarding the Minnesota Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate, and voiced my support for the Minnesota Consumer Choice for Fuel Act. With your upcoming hearing on March 16, I would like to share my letter to your committee as well:

I write to express my interest and support for the work currently underway to repeal and withdraw the Minnesota Zero Emissions Vehicle mandate otherwise known as “Clean Cars Minnesota.” My family are soybean and corn farmers in Minnesota and I have previously served as President of Minnesota Agri-Women and am currently 2<sup>nd</sup> VP of Minnesota Agri-Women. I support the bill introduced by Minnesota State Senator Andrew Mathews known as the “Minnesota Consumer Choice for Fuel Act.” I am hopeful state senators of both parties can rally behind support for this important legislation for a variety of reasons. I am unable to participate in the committee’s virtual March 9 hearing, but I wish to submit the following written testimony.

First, the decision for what vehicle Minnesota residents decide to purchase should be solely up for the consumer. Government mandates such as Clean Cars Minnesota are fundamentally a restriction on consumer choice. The way the mandate was written, auto dealers in Minnesota must purchase a select number of electric vehicles from automakers to have on their dealership lots and meet a quota for the sales each year. This market distortion will lead to a potential decrease in conventional internal combustion engine-powered vehicles to have on the auto dealers’ lots. The fewer options of conventional vehicles at dealerships throughout the state will mean fewer purchasing options for consumers like me. Ultimately, I can only conclude that Clean Cars Minnesota is a blatant attempt by government to dictate consumer behavior. That outcome is an abuse of the role of government. Even worse, the research by Governor Tim Walz’s administration has revealed that Minnesotans will be expected to pay approximately \$1,139 more per any new vehicle we purchase. Governor Walz owes it to his constituents to explain why this mandate is fair to every day residents like me.

Second, and closest to home for me personally, are the mandate’s discriminatory implications on Minnesota’s agricultural community. I authored an op-ed in January in the Fargo Forum titled, “The realities of a discriminatory electric vehicle mandate in Minnesota.” I’ve enclosed this op-ed below, which I hope will be instructive for your committee. My family and many other farmers throughout the state are heavily involved in soybean farming. This natural resource can help meet energy and fuel demands since it is harvested to produce biodiesel fuel. Biodiesel is proven to be an environmentally favorable form of fuel. The Environmental Protection Agency has found that biodiesel is the only biofuel that has the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 50%. A large portion of the biodiesel used in Minnesota is grown from Minnesota’s own soybeans, and the biodiesel plants in the state produce around 85 million gallons of biodiesel every year. I am concerned Clean Cars Minnesota will artificially prop up electric vehicle sales at the expense of biodiesel-fueled vehicles, and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota will similarly suffer. Even more concerning are the cascade effects of this new mandate. In light of other states taking aggressive moves in this direction, an even worse consequence would be a ban on all internal combustion engine vehicles which would be significantly more troublesome for our agricultural community. The Agricultural Retailers Association released a study in 2020, which found that U.S. net farm income would decrease by up to \$27 billion due to a proposed ban all internal combustion vehicles.

Third, Minnesota legislators I would think should not be happy with how this mandate went down last year. The Clean Cars Minnesota mandate was proposed and finalized by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, a government body under Governor Walz's administration. This body bypassed the state legislature, without the input and deliberation of our state's lawmakers elected by the voters of Minnesota, to adopt this mandate. Essentially this process advanced in a wholly undemocratic fashion whereby an unelected bureaucracy passed a major policy initiative that will affect all residents of our state. On that very basis alone, this mandate should be repealed and withdrawn.

Fourth, with the Biden Administration cancelling the leases with Twin Metals mining in northeast Minnesota, we will continue to have to import the minerals needed to make the electric components. Minnesota has one of the largest undeveloped copper-nickel-platinum-cobalt deposits in the world. Forcing Electric Vehicles on the citizens of Minnesota and then not being able to access our own resources to make those vehicles is not in the best interest of Minnesota's citizens nor energy security, economic security, and national security.

I hope the committee finds this testimony useful as it deliberates on a potential legislative fix for this very troubling government-directed electric vehicle mandate.

Sincerely,

Deb Whalen  
Past President  
Minnesota Agri-Women