Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association

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Chair Rarick, Ranking Member McEwen, Members of the Senate Labor and Industry Policy Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SF183. The Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA) strongly supports SF183 (A-1 amendment) which allows a person with the ASSE 5110 and 5130 certifications as well as a nationally recognized irrigation certification to repair backflow devices when attached to a landscape system, rather than just test. Backflow devices are critical to protecting both public health and Minnesota's water resources and drinking water and increasing the number of trained and certified technicians to do this important work is in the interest of public health, consumer choice, and environmental protection.

Despite having identical training in testing of backflow devices through the DLI-offered ASSE training, MNLA members are prohibited from even participating in the ASSE training required for repairing these devices, causing potential project delays and risk to potable water supplies. Based on feedback from stakeholders and DLI, the legislation is narrow in scope and only impacts landscape irrigation systems. Importantly, this bill would **not** allow the installation or replacement of these devices by non-plumbers, and MNLA does not seek to change this requirement for installation and replacement.

Backflow prevention and cross connections (and the associated assemblies that are used to protect potable water supplies) are considered by ASSE and other institutions to be unique and subject to specific, comprehensive training, regardless of and independent of status as a licensed plumber. The state of Minnesota has created statutes, rules, and an MOU with ASSE that require that only licensed plumbers can obtain ASSE backflow repairer training and become certified as MN repairers. The ASSE repairer coursework, testing, and practical exams would be the same for plumbers and non-plumbers.

For landscape contractors, being unable to repair these devices can cause significant project delays, threatening the investments of homeowners installing new landscapes and potentially causing harm to potable water supplies if left unrepaired. Equipped with the same knowledge and training, being able to repair a device following testing would ensure timely and quality attention to an identified hazard.

We respectfully request your support of SF183 to ensure that backflow devices are properly tested and repaired, protecting public health and drinking water in Minnesota.

Respectfully,

Forrest B. Cyr
MNLA
Director of Government Affairs