



January 20, 2023

Re: SF 4 - Electric utility renewable energy standard obligations modifications

Chair Frentz and committee members,

Vote Solar is a non-profit advocacy policy organization working to repower our communities with sunshine and build a thriving clean economy with affordable solar energy for all. I am the Regional Director, Midwest for Vote Solar and a lifelong resident of Minnesota. I am writing in support of Senate File 4.

Health Impacts

Enacting a 100% carbon-free electricity standard sets Minnesota on a path toward a clean, healthy, and prosperous future. The reduction in greenhouse gas and other pollutant emissions realized by the provisions set forward in this bill will save lives. In a recent report, the Minnesota Department of Health found that “a reduction of 10% in 2013 fine particle pollution levels could prevent up to 500 deaths”. Not only will this bill prevent premature deaths, but it will also serve to lessen pollution-related health conditions such as asthma, and other respiratory and cardiovascular health conditions.

Wealth Building and Affordability

This bill can also propel wealth-building in communities that have historically been left behind and harmed by our traditional energy infrastructure. Low-income families currently face disproportionately high energy burdens, averaging 8-30% of their household income. A more equitable and resilient power grid accomplished through local and distributed energy offers opportunities for communities to own their energy generation, and creates jobs that rebuild local wealth and support economic resilience throughout Minnesota. The citizens of this great state deserve the opportunity to take control of and reap benefits from a clean energy future.

Grid Capability

The 100% bill provides an aggressive decarbonization schedule along with safeguards for unintended consequences. We should take this opportunity to enact bold clean energy policies for Minnesota. In fact, Minnesota’s utilities are already well on their way to meeting the standards laid out within the bill - our two biggest Investor-owned utilities publicly announced pathways to 100% decarbonized energy prior to the passage of this bill. Along with this, [recent energy system modeling](#) by Vibrant Clean Energy, LLC found that: “a high penetration of renewable energy and energy storage deployments will not threaten the reliability of the electric grid, while still providing service at prices less than current costs.”



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Concerns

We echo partner concerns about changes in the definition of the large hydro provision. The exclusion of large hydro from the Renewable Standard definition was made in Minnesota law due to unethical practices perpetrated against Indigenous communities during the construction of dams. We should not gloss over or forget the real detrimental effects that persist today. Vote Solar commits to continuing advocacy for solutions that center the needs of Indigenous/frontline communities.

Conclusion

To be clear, now is the time to confirm Minnesota's commitment to a 100% clean energy future. I urge committee members to support the passage of Senate File 4.

Thank you,

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