

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

LOCAL No. 49, 49A, 49B, 49C, 49D, 49E, 49L
MINNESOTA • NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA

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Dear Senator Frentz and Members of the Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Committee

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49 (IUOE Local 49) represents more than 12,000 Operating Engineers and their families in Minnesota. Our members include heavy equipment operators and mechanics, along with stationary engineers. I write to respectfully express our concern with and opposition to SF2460.

As a labor union with a significant presence in the energy sector, we seek to regularly participate in Public Utilities Commission (PUC) proceedings that have an impact on the work that our members do. Like all advocacy work we do on behalf of our members, this work is funded by our members themselves. We firmly believe that PUC proceedings should be accessible and open to a wide range of perspectives and interests—including those that differ from our own. We simply object to the notion that our members should have to pay for these efforts as part of their utility bills beyond what is already allowed under current law.

Over the past decade there has been a significant increase in the number of organizations that participate in PUC proceedings. While previously many PUC proceedings were limited in participation to utilities, state agencies, low-income ratepayer advocates, and industrial users, it is now common to see clean energy organizations, labor unions, environmental justice organizations, and others in a wide range of dockets. The most recent Xcel Energy integrated resource plan included over 20 parties (with several performing independent energy system modeling) and over 8000 comments filed in the docket. This begs the question of why we would want to burden ratepayers with the additional costs of funding advocacy in front of the PUC.

The existing intervenor compensation statute is narrowly constructed to support organizations participating in rate cases—which are generally the most complex PUC proceedings. The current bill, as written, would significantly expand the range of dockets that individuals and organizations could seek compensation for participation in. It also increases the amount of money that could be requested as compensation. Under the current language, individual

participants would be eligible to receive up to \$200,000 in ratepayer money per year as compensation for their participation in PUC proceedings. This type of expansion is, in our view, unnecessary given the robust and growing participation from a wide range of organizations representing diverse perspectives in front of the PUC.

Additionally, the current bill is not appropriately tailored towards supporting organizations that most need financial assistance. The current language requires only that an organization be less than three years old, have a payroll of \$750,000 or less, or have \$100,000 or less in dedicated current year funding for participation in PUC proceedings. This criteria allows for a wide range of organizations that already receive dedicated funding from foundations or other sources to claim financial hardship.

As noted above, we are supportive of ensuring that PUC proceedings are accessible to all Minnesotans. We believe that the current PUC has taken important steps towards ensuring that a range of voices are heard and considered in its decision making. We just do not believe that it is necessary or appropriate at this time to utilize additional ratepayer funds to fund advocacy work in front of the PUC.

Sincerely,

John Pollard. Legislative Director, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49