



Chair Frentz and Members of the Senate Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Committee,

My name is Tom Dicklich and I am the Executive Director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council. Together, our affiliated Unions represent over 70,000 union workers across the state.

Our members are affected by decisions made by the Public Utilities Commission in their capacities as workers who build and maintain energy infrastructure; customers who pay utility bills and rely on utility services for power and fuel; and employees of construction companies that not only rely on utility services but often work in energy-intensive industries.

The Minnesota Building Trades has participated in PUC proceedings on a limited basis, and several of our affiliated unions intervene more regularly in dockets that impact our members. We appreciate the willingness of the Commissioners to consider the views of stakeholders – not just from organized labor but from groups and individuals representing business, community and environmental concerns.

We support efforts to make PUC proceedings more open and inclusive of diverse voices, including funding for participation by Tribal governments. But we are concerned that SF 2460 as currently proposed will not accomplish this goal, but could instead do the opposite by providing a much larger megaphone to groups that are well resourced and represented in the process. We also believe that, as currently structured, SF 2460 could invite abuse by private interests that might seek to use the program for financial gain at the expense of ratepayers.

Under SF 2460, organizations that seek compensation must spend their own resources participating in the process and do so effectively enough to impact the ultimate decision in order to qualify for reimbursement of some or all of their expenses. As a result, those likely to claim the bulk of compensation awards are the usual suspects: organizations that already receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in foundation funding to lobby the PUC. Meanwhile, communities and groups that are not lucky enough to receive foundation funding or equivalent resources could see little benefit and even see their voices diminished as well-funded voices get louder.

Similarly, nothing in SF 2460 as currently proposed would prevent individuals or organizations from attempting to use the program to advance private interests at ratepayer expense. Under the current language, there is no upper limit to the amount that a private individual could earn annually for putting their stamp on a wide range of

proceedings that can include matters as simple as approval of land and equipment sales. There is also nothing that would prevent an industry-affiliated nonprofit organization from being compensated as much as \$200,000 per year for advocacy that advances the interest of their business sponsors.

Finally, we are concerned that some of the millions of dollars in proposed resources for intervenor compensation could be used to delay or block the deployment of energy infrastructure needed to reliably and affordably meet the state's energy goals. As currently proposed, SF 2460 could provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation to opponents of energy projects, including not only gas-fired power plants that may be needed to maintain reliability, but also new renewable generation and transmission or and investments to extend the lives of existing nuclear power plants. By using ratepayer funds to intervene in Certificate of Need or other resource proceedings, these organizations and individuals could slow the energy transition and increase costs for ratepayers.

Based on these concerns, we urge members of the Senate Energy Committee to carefully weigh the potential unintended consequences of a significant and costly change to the current intervenor compensation program, and to consider changes to the scope of the bill in order to minimize risks to ratepayers and to the public interest. If legislators choose to move forward with the bill this session, we ask that the expansion be authorized on a pilot basis at a smaller scale that does not unduly burden ratepayers or drown out the voices of those without the resources or expertise to benefit from the program.

Sincerely,

Tom Dicklich
Executive Director