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Minnesota Senate Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Committee
3109 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Frentz and Committee Members,

Fresh Energy is a 30-year-old, Minnesota-based nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization. We work to shape and drive bold policy solutions to achieve equitable carbon-neutral economies. Fresh Energy is pleased to support Senator Rarick's Senate File 2987 to amend the Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Act definition of "low-income household" under Minnesota Statute section 216B.2402, subdivision 16.

The current definition of low-income in the ECO Act excludes participation of some households that have historically been eligible under long-standing, low-income energy conservation programs (formerly known as the Conservation Improvement Program, or CIP). Before this definition was adopted, the Department of Commerce would determine eligibility on a case-by-case basis, which provided flexibility and encouraged ongoing collaboration and conversation between the agency and utilities. This also allowed each utility to develop low-income programs based on the unique needs and challenges of their customer base.

The Energy Access and Equity team at Fresh Energy works to ensure Minnesota's transition to a clean energy economy is just and equitable, and that all Minnesotans—especially those who are underserved—can reasonably access and leverage energy efficiency and electrification programs. We must ensure the investment in low-income energy programs is expanded upon and not restricted.

We support the flexibility this bill provides in allowing the Department of Commerce some discretion for identifying eligible households that align with existing federal, state, municipal or utility programs. This will streamline the administrative and implementation processes and allow for greater participation in low-income ECO programs, leading to lower monthly utility costs across the state. Reducing energy burden is not only a priority of Fresh Energy's, but also that of Minnesota's Climate Action Framework.

We thank Senator Rarick for his leadership and encourage members of the committee to support Senate File 2987.

Sincerely,

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