

March 27, 2023

Chair, Patty Acomb

Chair, Nick Frentz

Chair, Liz Olson

Chair, John Marty

From: Community Power

Dear Senators and Representatives,

We appreciate your hard work and dedication to our State, and the long hours you have put into discussions related to energy, environmental justice and the future of the workforce in these fields. Although we appreciate many provisions included in the energy bill this year, we are deeply concerned that an insufficient budget target for proposed climate and energy policies means we will fall short of building an equitable clean energy future. We urge you to pass and fund ambitious, equitable climate legislation this session, and in particular to support four vital policies for energy justice:

- Creation and full funding of the Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority (House File 2336, Senate File 2301)
- Expansion of intervenor compensation at the Public Utilities Commission (House File 2439, Senate File 2460)
- Expansion of Solar on Schools program — Solar on All Schools (House File 3102, Senate File 2761)
- Utility Contract Demographic Report (House File 49, Senate File 315)

Community Power works to ensure the benefits of the clean energy transition accrue to all Minnesotans, not just the big utility corporations. We are committed to a goal of advancing energy, democracy, equity, and justice and believe that you are too.

We are very disappointed with the small target of \$255 million assigned to Climate and Energy. At a time of climate crisis and in the face of pervasive, ongoing environmental injustice Minnesota will be missing a prime opportunity to address climate change, access new Federal funds for clean energy, and support the communities most impacted by environmental injustices, particularly BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, low-income households, and rural Minnesotans.

Among other legislative priorities, we urge you to support and adequately fund these four policies that we believe are a vital part of building an equitable and just clean energy economy that serves all Minnesotans.

[Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority | House File 2336 \(Greenman\), Senate File 2301 \(Xiong\)](#)

This bill would establish the Minnesota Climate Innovation Finance Authority. The Authority would be an independent, mission-driven green finance institution that would use an array of financial tools to leverage private investment for clean energy deployment and climate change mitigation while centering the needs and voices of environmental justice communities. Augmenting and enhancing our

finance capabilities is vital to reduce household energy costs and grow clean energy jobs for all Minnesotans. Passing this bill at the full requested appropriation (\$45 million) increases Minnesota's competitiveness for \$27 billion in federal grants available for green financing and local clean energy deployment through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (created by the Inflation Reduction Act).

[Intervenor Compensation | House File 2439 \(Hollins\), Senate File 2460 \(Xiong\)](#)

We understand there is consideration of adding a sunset to the intervenor compensation and we strongly oppose this. Passing a strong intervenor compensation bill this session *with no sunset* is essential to enable meaningful community participation in the Public Utilities Commission's decision-making process. Funding the participation of marginalized communities and then revoking that funding is almost worse than never serving environmental justice and BIPOC communities in the first place.

[Solar on All Schools Program Improvements | House File 3102 \(Hollins\), Senate File 2761 \(Xiong\)](#)

This bill allows all schools to put up right-sized arrays with battery storage using either grants or loans, maximizing public/private investments to install more solar projects around the State. Currently most schools in Greater MN are limited through the program to 40 KW arrays, while schools in Xcel territory are eligible for 1000 KW arrays. This bill creates an Infrastructure grant program to help the local utilities make grid improvements that will serve the school and community and allow for interconnection. It allows rural electric co-ops and municipal utilities to apply net metering at the applicable retail rate for up to 40KW, and it asks for \$350,000 for an independent study to set up a net metering system that will meet future energy needs. It sizes the arrays at 120% of the current and contractually committed usage levels, rather than potential future usage levels. Finally, it proposes funding for learning tools in the classroom. These changes can help schools save money on energy costs and increase investment in educational needs.

[Utility Contract Demographic Report \(House File 49\)](#)

The clean energy sector in Minnesota is going to grow explosively in the next decade as we electrify everything we can in order to decarbonize our economy. Our BIPOC communities must fully participate in the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities accompanying this growth. If we do not track BIPOC participation in employment and contracting, we will not be able to insure their equitable participation. This is fundamental to environmental justice and equitable development.

We look forward to enacting this essential legislation to create community wealth and fight climate change. Please let us know if you would like to discuss any of these policies with us in further detail.

Sincerely,

Marcus Mills

Vice President

Community Power