

March 22, 2023

Senator Foug Hawj  
Chair, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
3231 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: S.F. 2438, Environment and Natural Resources Appropriations**

Dear Chair Hawj,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, formed to address waste management and energy issues. The Partnership seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate.

The Partnership thanks you for introducing S.F. 2438, the governor's bill for environment and natural resources appropriations. We appreciate the opportunity to express support for several provisions of S.F. 2438 that will have significant impact on protecting public health and the environment and help counties and communities be more successful in reaching challenging statutory goals on waste management.

**Priority Provisions**

The Partnership highlights these provisions as priorities for full funding.

- *SCORE grant funding.* Maintaining baseline funding is foundational to support waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting efforts in the state and assist counties in meeting state mandates. (Lines 13.1 – 13.3)
- *Recycling Market Development.* Recycling market development grants builds capacity within the state to make products out of materials collected in the state's recycling programs, which is particularly important during times of market volatility. This work also expands jobs and economic development in the state. (Lines 13.8 – 13.11)
- *Food waste reduction, food rescue, and organics recovery.* Ambitious state recycling mandates will not be met without addressing the biggest component of our trash stream—food waste and other organic materials. Grants to businesses, non-profits, and local government are one important tool in this effort. (Lines 13.12 – 13.20)
- *Waste prevention and reduction grants and loans.* The grant and loan programs presented in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's budget proposal will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make important contributions in achieving state waste management goals. These resources are needed to address food waste, develop higher and better uses for tree waste—a critical need as the emerald ash borer attacks increasing numbers of trees in the

coming decades, expand the impact of recycling and compost market development efforts, reduce landfilling of materials from our built environment and support a variety of waste prevention, reuse and recycling activities by counties and our partners in the community. (Lines 15.7 – 15.14)

- *Funding Minnesota ReLeaf.* Strapped communities need resources now as the emerald ash borer destroys community forests and urban canopy in a growing number of counties (40 and counting). Replacement of removed ash trees is vital to the health and well-being of our residents and to blunt the impacts of climate change. (Lines 23.28 – 24.6)

The Partnership also strongly supports the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) request for additional staffing to address backlogs in solid waste permitting. Our counties are pursuing innovative and emerging solutions to meet the state's waste management mandates. For example, our counties are putting significant resources into developing anaerobic digestion facilities that will significantly reduce disposal of food waste and other organic waste in landfills and waste-to-energy facilities. We need a strong partnership with the agency as these and other facilities are developed. Long delays risk project viability and missed federal grant opportunities for necessary projects.

### **Other Provisions to Support**

The Partnership also supports several other provisions in S.F. 2438.

- Funding to carry out agencies' responsibilities addressing chemicals of concern in children's products and other products, including PFAS in food packaging, and updating statutes related to lead and cadmium in products.
- Implementing Minnesota's PFAS Blueprint and funding PFAS reduction grants.
- Expanding project eligibility and increasing funding limits under the MPCA's Capital Assistance Projects program.
- Small business loans and grants for pollution prevention and other emission reductions.
- Local Recycling Development Grant (LRDG) funding.
- Updating the state's product stewardship statutes for paint (PaintCare program).
- Advancing MPCA efforts to define and advance environmental justice in permitting and enforcement activities, examine cumulative impacts and engage with communities and community members in the permitting process.
- Funding for modeling impacts, costs and benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Completing a solar equipment recycling and reuse report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Partnership's positions on S.F. 2438. We stand ready to work together on these important issues for the benefit of our communities and the state.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County  
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

cc: Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee members