

To: To: To: MN House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
From: Jefferey Munter
RE: HF2096

Good Afternoon Chairperson Stephenson and members of the committee.

My name is Jeff Munter, and I want to emphasize just how important these bills are in preventing the extensive damage I've seen they can do.

I come before you not as a scientist or a legal representative, but as an eyewitness to the fallout you've heard about from my good friend, Amara Strande.

From the first day myself and others at the Tartan High School Theater department found out one of our own had been diagnosed with cancer, we were scared and we were heartbroken. It was dark to know that someone with so much talent and light in their soul was about to face one of the most cruel diseases a human can endure. It was a lot to comprehend as young adults, and I couldn't imagine what it must've been like for her.

Time has since passed, and I still to this day can't comprehend how so much can be taken away from someone at such a young age. It's not easy visiting someone in the hospital late in the day when they should be at home getting frustrated with math homework. It's difficult to imagine that time she should've spent with butterflies in her stomach the week before a performance was replaced with the anxiety of a high risk surgery. Nothing can prepare you knowing your friend needs to endure things like that constantly.

It never gets easier to hear things like "I will die with this cancer" or "I don't have a lot of options left." The anger and the exhaustion from this goes beyond anything I can express or even come close to understanding, and this all began before she could start her own life. It's hard to know that this impacts every part of her world, preventing her from having the normal life someone like me often takes for granted.

Like most adults I find myself complaining about my jobs pretty often, not realizing the value of being able to work. I get frustrated getting stuck in traffic, which you're not usually able to experience if you can't drive. It's not fun to have to tackle an entire day when you're exhausted, so I can't imagine dealing with that all the time on chemo.

It's one thing to look from this perspective and think "Wow, that is sad," but it's unthinkable imagining yourself or your family in that position. I know how hard it is for her parents to have to see their daughter like this, what if my parents had to watch one of their children try to live with cancer? I know this takes a terrible toll on her sister, what if I had to watch my sister go through this? What about one of my cousins, an aunt or uncle, another one of my friends, someone who lives in my neighborhood, or anyone who gets exposed to needlessly risky chemicals?

As a lifelong Minnesotan, I feel fortunate to live in a state that prides itself on looking out for one another. I've often called it a statewide community. We're kind enough to open doors for people we don't even know, or help a neighbor when they're in need. Today my fellow Minnesota neighbors, I'm here to tell you that these bills are essential to looking out for each other.

If the usage of forever chemicals are allowed to continue throughout the state, more of us will have to endure the dark days you've heard Amara describe to you. Her nightmares are not the cost of doing business, but rather the absence of accountability. Although I appreciate promises to move away from these chemicals, I've seen too much to accept breathing room for negligence. Businesses will always be essential for the goods and services we need and thrive on, but nowhere in the business model is the motive to self regulate. The business model won't beholden to our State values, so it's up to us to hold them accountable. The time to act is now, and these bills will allow us to continue looking after one another, as Minnesotans do best.

I thank you for your time, and hope you consider this when making your final decision.