

February 12th, 2023

Mr. Tom Melton
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave. W.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Ref: Senate File 1173

Dear Mr. Melton:

On behalf of Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), I would like to express our support for Senate File 1173. This funding is critical for all energy transition communities as they plan for a future fraught with challenges to replace tax base, jobs, and many other significant issues.

With a mission to grow the Itasca County economy through education, research, and outreach that creates business opportunities, Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) is based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, and is home to the Boswell Energy Center. We are a transition community and understand firsthand the hurdles we are already facing. While we advocate and hope for additional funding, the \$10M allotted through Senate File 1173 is an important step. It will help to ensure that communities like ours have the funds to develop a strategic plan for an uncertain future.

Our organization's vision is a diverse and growing economy that supports a high quality of life for all of Itasca County. Workforce Development, support for entrepreneurs, small business assistance, and business recruitment, retention, and expansion are just a few of the activities helping to bring this vision to life. In 2022, I was selected as a community representative for Governor Waltz's Energy Transition Advisory Committee (ETAC). As the Vice Chair, I visited energy transition communities across Minnesota and learned about the unique challenges they must overcome. Together our group engaged in a series of presentations and meetings to help us understand how to navigate energy transition.

While an incredible experience, it was impossible not to feel the fear just beneath the surface in conversations with workers at plants, community leaders, and my fellow ETAC members. It is easy to imagine our communities failing to overcome the hurdles related to transition, and the devastating results for our friends and neighbors. Navigating transition must be a statewide effort. We need both rural and metro leaders to come together to help us weather this storm and come out better on the other side.

Boswell Energy Center, a MN Power coal fired power plant, has been a critical part of the Itasca County economy for decades. It is not only an important source of tax revenue, but it also provides high-quality employment, and is a leader in the community. IEDC has had a long-standing partnership with MN Power, the City of Cohasset, and Itasca County. Together with the support of Senate Bill 1173, we can build plans, ensure sites are shovel ready, and work together on a strategic plan that engages all those in our community.

This bill is one piece of the puzzle that is needed to find a Just Transition for the City of Cohasset, Itasca County, our region, and our state. It is innovative and will ensure our communities have tools they need to forge ahead.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We are excited to see Senate Bill 1173 move forward and provide continued support for our energy transition communities.

Sincerely,



Tamara Lowney
President
Itasca Economic Development Corporation