Center for Energy and Environment

February 21, 2024

Senator Nick Frentz
Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Frentz and Members of the Energy, Utilities, Environment and Climate Committee,

Center for Energy and Environment ("CEE") respectfully submits this letter to express our support for SF 3120 to direct the Minnesota Department of Commerce to study and evaluate the potential costs, benefits, and impacts of advanced nuclear technologies in Minnesota.

Minnesota has ambitious plans to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, greenhouse gas emissions from our electric system. To do so, will require significant changes to our energy systems, including technological advancements to ensure resource adequacy and reliability of our critical energy systems. As such, CEE supports efforts to study and evaluate new technologies and fuels that may help to achieve our state's energy and emissions goals, particularly those fuels and technologies with the potential to be firm, dispatchable energy resources, like advanced nuclear technologies.

Nuclear energy has played an important role in Minnesota's electric system since the early 1970's. Minnesota's nuclear generating units provide emissions-free, reliable, baseload power and hundreds of high-quality jobs. Despite those benefits, the history of our nuclear fleet has been complicated from the beginning as our largest nuclear plant and its growing stock of spent fuel is located on indigenous land, just feet from the Prairie Island Indian Community. Additionally, these large-scale, central nuclear plants can be costly to maintain and produce significant amounts of spent fuel, for which there is no known removal and permanent storage solution.

New advanced nuclear technologies differ significantly from nuclear plants of the past. These technologies are smaller in scale and promise to be more efficient and more cost-effective than older nuclear power plants. Moreover, as we transition to emissions-free energy resources, these technologies could be a source of much-needed firm, dispatchable, emissions-free electricity. Still, it is critical that we study these new technologies fully to ensure that the benefits of new nuclear technologies outweigh the costs, including the costs to communities who might host them, before taking further action.

CEE support SF 3120. Advanced nuclear technologies should be thoroughly studied and evaluated to understand the potential role they may play in enabling an emissions-free, reliable, and affordable energy system in Minnesota, as well as their environmental, economic, and community impacts. Such a study will provide valuable information to lawmakers, regulators, and utilities, as well as communities who may consider hosting these technologies if they prove promising and appropriate for Minnesota's energy system.

Sincerely,

/s/ Audrey Partridge
Director of Policy
Center for Energy and Environment