

March 21, 2024

Minnesota State Senate
Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy
Senate Building, Room 1200
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Senate File 4784 - Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act

Dear Chair Hawj, Senator Frentz, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM), we write today in support of SF4784, the Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act. We appreciated the opportunity to represent CEEM in the work that was undertaken by the permitting reform stakeholder group.

CEEM is an industry-led, nonpartisan, non-profit organization representing the business voice of energy efficiency and clean energy in Minnesota. We are focused on educating Minnesotans about the economic benefits of transitioning to a clean energy economy. Our business membership is comprised of over 60 clean energy companies ranging from start-up businesses to Fortune 100 and 500 corporations that employ tens of thousands of Minnesotans across the state. CEEM stands committed to delivering a 100% clean energy future where all Minnesota businesses and citizens will thrive.

CEEM's business members are working with utilities to build the clean energy grid of the future. A grid that is affordable, reliable, resilient, and flexible. However, for years, we have heard from our members that their projects are slowed down by an inefficient and unpredictable permitting process—especially when compared to the work many of them are doing in other states across the country. This resulted in project delays and developers looking to prioritize investments in other states. Simply put, our permitting process is putting us at a competitive disadvantage.

Minnesota's permitting process needs to be updated. It was established 50 years ago, and any updates have been minor and confusing band-aids to account for massive changes in technology. At a time when our state needs to add capacity to meet the expected load growth from the expansion of data centers, electrification, as well as fulfill our new clean energy laws and net-zero goals, the time projects spend in the permitting process is actually getting longer.

Our business membership is asking us to help reverse this trend. The reforms in this bill are focused on eliminating redundant steps, increasing consistency across projects and technologies, and simplifying public input opportunities, all while ensuring robust environmental review for projects. These reforms will shave several months off of the permitting process. The difference of a couple of months can mean the difference of an entire year, given the seasonality of construction in Minnesota.

The reality is that time is of the essence to reach our state's 100% Clean Energy law. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission brought together a broad coalition of stakeholders – utilities, clean energy groups, clean energy businesses, labor unions, agricultural groups, and more – to find ways to cut out unnecessary and confusing steps in the permitting process. The bill in front of you today is the consensus that came from that group.

We have 16 years to reach Minnesota's law of 100% Clean Energy by 2040. This proposal is a strong step towards delivering on that law while also making Minnesota a better, more predictable place to do business.

Thank you for your time today. CEEM and our business members would welcome the opportunity to discuss in detail how permitting reform will make it easier to invest, grow jobs, and do business in our state as we work towards a prosperous clean energy future. Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for Senate File 4784.

Sincerely,



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