

Re: Environmental Review Reform - HF 4028/SF 4183

Chair Dziedzic and Members of the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee:

We are writing to ask you to support HF 4028/SF 4183. This legislation will ensure a predictable and practical comprehensive plan development process, while preventing frivolous lawsuits brought under the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) exemplified by the case against the Minneapolis 2040 plan.

Middle and low income Minnesotans are finding it increasingly difficult to rent or buy a home in part because the share of low-cost rental housing in Minnesota has fallen by a quarter over the last decade, while the cost of buying a home has more than doubled between 2012 to 2022. As a result, Minnesota families have been forced to devote a growing share of their household budget to housing. More than 10% of Minnesotans, or 590,530, are cost burdened, which is defined as housing costs that exceed 30% of household income.

The City of Minneapolis took an important step to reduce zoning restrictions and incentivize new housing development under the 2040 plan. More housing development of all types is needed to meet our housing needs. In addition, these critical projects create good family-sustaining jobs. We support pro-density zoning and those aspects of the Minneapolis 2040 plan that would bring more housing and development.

We appreciate this legislative effort to address the misapplication of MERA on comprehensive planning processes. We urge support for HF 4028/SF 4183.

