

May 2, 2024

Minnesota Senate
State and Local Government and Veterans Committee
Room 1200 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Dziedzic, Vice Chair Mitchell, Ranking Member Anderson, Committee Members Bahr, Carlson, Cwodzinski, Drazkowski, Fateh, Gustafson, Jasinski, Koran, Lang, Maye Quade, and Morrison,

I write to you today as a physician and father and urge the passage of SF 4316. This bill would provide cities a mechanism to amortize, or phase out, harmful facilities that no longer conform to current zoning laws. Certain facilities simply do not belong in dense neighborhoods, and state law must reflect this.

I am an Internal Medicine and Pediatrics Resident Physician and my continuity clinic is conducted at the Community University Health Care Center (CUHCC). CUHCC is a Federally Qualified Health Center that serves patients of all income levels with and without insurance and is nestled in the Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis.¹ We offer our services on a sliding fee scale to make them available to everyone.

The people of the Phillips Neighborhood are subjected to environmental racism. Asthma rates among children in East Phillips are more than two times higher than the state average. In 2019, children ages 0-17 had a statewide asthma hospitalization rate of 5.9 per 10,000 people, compared to a rate of 15.6 per 10,000 people in East Phillips.² This comes as a surprise to none of my patients. They live in a community that is dense and intimately proximate to multiple industrial plants that are not found in predominantly white residential communities across the state. A notable company is Smith Foundry, which emits into the Little Earth of United Tribes and East Phillips Community. In May 2023 the United States Environmental Protection Agency inspected Smith Foundry and discovered potential Clean Air Act violations from the foundry's operations.³ Local leaders in the City of Minneapolis are unable hold Smith to current zoning laws because of the amortization prohibition provision in Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 462.357, subdivision 1c.

In addition to my clinical responsibilities, I am also a parent of twin sons who attend daycare at Círculo de Amigos Child Care Center, which is directly across the street from Smith Foundry. As a parent and pediatrician I am intimately aware of the impacts of toxic exposures to the developing brain and lungs.⁴ During the first years of life, the lung is highly vulnerable to acute injury and continued exposure can predispose children to chronic lung disease into adolescence and adulthood. A foundry that does not meet current zoning laws should not be allowed to emit while kids play outside across the street.

I urge the passage of this bill that will directly improve the health of kids and community members of the Phillips Neighborhood by directly disrupting health disparities.

Sincerely,

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1. <https://cuhcc.umn.edu/>

2. <https://www.minnpost.com/race-health-equity/2022/09/environmental-justice-advocates-continue-fight-against-east-phillips-public-works-hub/>

3. <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/local-sites-and-projects/minneapolis-smith-foundry>

4. Dondi A, et. al. Outdoor Air Pollution and Childhood Respiratory Disease: The Role of Oxidative Stress. Int J Mol Sci. 2023 Feb 22;24(5):4345. doi: 10.3390/ijms24054345.