

February 29, 2024

Dear Chair Champion and Members of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee:

On behalf of the 29,000 members and family members of Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Minnesota and North Dakota, I am writing to urge you to support the confirmation of Matt Varilek as the Commissioner of Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

LIUNA members live and work in every corner of the state and want good jobs, fair wages, good schools, reliable healthcare and time for family. We rely on DEED to keep Minnesota on track to create family- and community-supporting jobs that improve the economic well-being of LIUNA members, families and neighbors.

Under Commissioner Varilek's leadership, our experience with DEED is that the department has an open door and is committed to building relationships and learning more about the contributions our members make to create a better state for everyone. Specifically, we are grateful for our strong partnership with the Public Facilities Authority to catch up and keep up Minnesota's water infrastructure, including failing wastewater treatment plants, inadequate stormwater systems and lead water lines that threaten public health and undermine local economies.

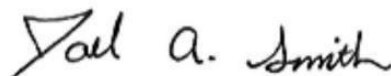
We also appreciate the Office of Broadband Development's efforts to connect Minnesotans to reliable high-speed internet and address safety concerns for broadband workers and infrastructure. LIUNA is proud to partner with DEED to create career pathways to a better life for thousands of men and women in the skilled construction trades. Finally, our members and their families rely on the effective delivery of unemployment insurance and implementation of the paid family and medical leave program.

Commissioner Varilek's background gives him a unique understanding of Minnesotans who choose to live and work in Greater Minnesota – from going to college in Northfield and serving the people of South Dakota, to living in rural Benton County and serving as President of the Little Falls-based Initiative Foundation. Commissioner Varilek's experience as the Chief Operating Officer and regional administrator for Region VIII of the U.S. Small Business Administration also provides him a valuable perspective on working people.

The Walz Flanagan Administration and Legislature delivered many wins for Minnesota families in 2023, and there's much more we can and must do. Let's keep moving forward and fixing Minnesota. We urge you to support Commissioner Varilek's confirmation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



President and Business Manager
LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota