

March 6, 2025

Senator Found Hawj
Chair, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support - S.F. 1690

Dear Chair Hawj and Members of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, formed to address waste management and energy issues. The Partnership seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate.

Electronic waste and batteries must be kept out of the mixed municipal solid waste stream and disposal facilities to reduce waste toxicity and prevent risks to the environment and public health, as well as recover valuable products and essential materials for reuse and recycling. Waste facilities are seeing increasing fires and are struggling to manage the liability issues associated with fires from the increase in lithium-ion batteries being placed in trash and recycling.

Current laws are outdated and leave the financial and operational burdens on counties. This is contrary to the original purpose of these statutes, which were written to hold manufacturers responsible. These statutes also do not adequately account for the significant change over the years in the nature and types of electronics and rechargeable batteries that consumers purchase. This includes the ever-increasing stream of electronics with embedded batteries that cannot easily be removed.

To address the risks and liability, counties are taking matters into their own hands. For example, Washington County recently included a clause in their Cannabis Ordinance requiring a take-back program for single-use vaping devices. Most consumers are unaware that those devices include an embedded battery that present a fire risk when thrown in the trash. However, a county-by-county approach is not ideal for consumers or retailers.

The Partnership on Waste and Energy supports legislative action to update the existing electronic waste recycling law and various battery laws to put responsibility for managing these products on the industries designing and producing them. Changes made to these laws need to reflect the current nature of products and provide flexibility for an evolving marketplace, as presented in S.F. 1690. This proposal is designed around our residents who lack the accessibility of collection options and lack quality information on which products need to be kept out of trash and recycling bins and brought to a site for recycling or safe management.

PARTNERSHIP ON WASTE AND ENERGY
HENNEPIN | RAMSEY | WASHINGTON

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RE: Partnership support for SF 1690

Thank you, Chair Hawj, for hearing this bill. We encourage a thoughtful evaluation of proposed changes and advancement of a bill that makes recycling more convenient and less costly for consumers and relieves burdens and risks on counties and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fran Miron", is positioned above the typed name.

Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy