

February 12, 2025

Via Federal Express and Email as Indicated

Beth Ethier (via email to beth.ethier@mnsenate.gov)
Committee Administrator of the Transportation Committee
Minnesota State Senate
3107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator D. Scott Dibble (61, DFL)
Chair of the Transportation Committee
Minnesota State Senate
3107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Written Testimony in Opposition to S.F. 485 as Introduced to the 94th
Legislature by Senator John Marty (40, DFL) (the “Bill”)**

Dear Chair Sen. Dibble and Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee:

Clear Channel Outdoor, LLC (“CCO” or “we”) respectfully submits this written testimony in opposition to the above-captioned Bill, which would, *inter alia*, establish a statewide moratorium on new billboards and declare legally permitted existing billboards in the State to be nonconforming uses.

CCO is one of the largest out-of-home advertising companies in the country, with major business holdings in 43 of the top 50 United States markets. One of our proudest markets is our Minneapolis/St. Paul office, which employs 40 proud Minnesotan professionals (“Our Local Office”). Our Local Office’s work is thorough and wide-ranging; we manage the CCO real estate portfolio in Minnesota by extending our contractual relationships with our landlord partners; we negotiate deals with municipalities all over the State that give public benefits to local governments in exchange for the right to responsibly develop new infrastructure in accordance with enacted code; we sell advertising space to Minnesota businesses so that the public at large knows about the goods and services they provide; and we deftly solve day to day operational issues that arise at our billboard sites – just to name a few. We strongly oppose the Bill for multiple reasons as set forth in the bullet points below:

- There are already significant controls regulating billboards in the State of Minnesota. Indeed, billboards are already limited to commercial and industrial corridors. In addition to this state control, the overwhelming majority of local municipalities in our State vigorously regulate our industry pursuant to stringent local sign codes. These codes either already prohibit the development of new billboards or only allow for limited development if all required statutory criteria are satisfied.

- Where we do decide – together with our municipal partners – to develop new billboards capable of displaying digital advertising, we provide tangible economic and public benefits to these municipalities. These public benefits include free public service messaging, Amber Alerts, FBI alerts, other emergency messaging such as weather alerts or news alerts, as well as messaging for community and civic events. We often hear from our municipal partners that this free public service messaging provides a critical opportunity for community members to hear about public events and know what to do in the case of an emergency.
- Additionally, we install, operate, and maintain some of our sign structures on land that is owned by municipalities pursuant to lease agreements with those public entities. This provides key non-property tax income to these municipalities.
- We are proud to provide a public forum for display of all kinds of messaging – in a world where one’s news feed and daily media intake can be easily curated, our signs offer local businesses and public entities the opportunity to display advertising copy to all persons passing by. Our local business advertising clients often tell us that our sign structures afford them the opportunity to reach potential clients and customers that they may have not otherwise been able to reach. In fact, contrary to what Sen. Marty proffers in the Bill (that billboards are somehow *hurting* the tourism industry in the State), we respectfully submit that State’s tourism industry as well as the State itself displays advertising copy on our signs all over the State.
- Additionally, there is a lot that goes into keeping our signs operational and our advertising copy visible. CCO – and its industry partners who are also active in the State – use local employees to negotiate leases, to sell ad space, to create copy, to produce and post vinyl advertising displays on printed signs, to performing regular maintenance on our sign structures, and to working with municipalities to develop and post community messaging. We employ union and non-union professionals throughout the State and we are proud of all of the work that they do everyday.

For these reasons, CCO expresses strong opposition to the Bill. The Bill – which is unnecessary and duplicative because we are already strongly regulated by federal, state, and local laws - fails to recognize the vital economic role that our industry provides in this State. We welcome the opportunity to dialogue with you and the other members of your Committee about more balanced approaches or any arguments raised in this letter.

Sincerely,



/s/ Matthew Weiland

Vice President of Real Estate and Public Affairs
Clear Channel Outdoor, LLC