

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 18, 2025

Senator Ann Rest  
Chair, Senate Taxes Committee  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Capitol, Room 328  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for S.F. 1089 (Soil Water Conservation District Aid)

Dear Senator Rest,

I write to express Hennepin County Board of Commissioners' support for S.F. 1089.

Hennepin County carries out the roles and responsibilities of a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). I am writing you today to ask you to support a statutory appropriation for SWCD Aid.

SWCDs are a primary source of conservation information, support, and program management for landowners and other local units of government. We are the technical experts and "boots on the ground" who understand our community's needs and help landowners navigate conservation programs from start to finish.

Lawmakers recently approved permanent funding for soil and water conservation district capacity, known as SWCD Aid, through the general fund. In the current biennium, the state appropriated \$15 million per year in SWCD Aid. This was an important step in improving the ability of all SWCDs to deliver the services essential for performing our statutory duties through stable, predictable funding, and a long-term investment in SWCDs as partners in achieving the state's soil health and water quality goals.

Starting in 2025 and in all future years, SWCD Aid will be reduced to \$12 million per year. This decrease in funding does not match the increased demands put on districts for implementing conservation practices, serving residents and delivering on statutory obligations.

Increasing funding to SWCD Aid is key to advancing conservation work and goes to assisting our county's residents to complete habitat, water quality improvement, and forestry projects. Here's just a few of the types of soil and water conservation projects and assistance that we have provided in the past few years throughout Hennepin County:

- Stormwater management improvements such as rain gardens, bioswales, infiltration basins, and stormwater retention and reuse systems
- Pollinator habitat improvement and establishment
- Soil health management improvements including cover crops, strip tillage, and introduction of perennial crops into crop rotations
- Best management practices to reduce soil loss erosion on agricultural land like grassed waterways, WASCOBs, pasture fencing and waterers, heavy use area protection, pasture overseeing
- Tree inventories with municipal partner to locate trees in rights of way and on public property and to determine locations of ash trees that will need to be treated or removed and replaced
- Tree plantings at a wide variety of schools, public properties and rights of ways, and affordable housing complexes to improve and increase the tree canopy
- Placing conservation easements and habitat restoration and improvement projects

Thank you to Senator Hauschild for introducing S.F. 1089 and the bill co-authors. We encourage favorable action on this bill to ensure Hennepin County can continue to be an efficient and effective steward of our state's resources.

Sincerely,



Irene Fernando