



Environmental Quality Board  
520 Lafayette Road North  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 7, 2017

Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3207  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Dan Fabian  
359 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen and Representative Dan Fabian,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Omnibus Environment Finance bill, House File 888. The Environmental Quality Board (EQB or Board) has the following concerns with budget and policy provisions contained in the bill. We look forward to addressing these concerns during the conference committee process.

**Budget Provisions in HF 888:**

*EQB Environmental Review Continuous Improvement:* The Governor's 2018/19 budget proposes the continuation and expansion of an effort to modernize the Environmental Review (ER) Program, with an emphasis on training and support to local governments. Having an ER Program that is efficient and effective, and meets the needs of Minnesota businesses and citizens requires an ongoing investment. Without this funding, the EQB will be forced to cut two positions and will be unable to continue updates to ER rules, enhanced data collection, and outreach to local partners.

*EQB Base Funding:* The level of base funding is consistent in both the House and Senate. The EQB prefers the appropriations language from the Senate bill, Senate File 723.

**Policy Provisions Contained in HF 888:**

Below is a list of policy provisions contained in House File 888 that we have concerns with, all of which were inserted in the bill through amendments in Finance committees. The EQB's enabling statutes were passed into law in 1973 and have been left unchanged for 44 years. While we are open to exploring ideas for reform, we are generally concerned about the impacts of passing major structural changes without the opportunity for publicly vetting the impacts of these proposals.

*Changes to EQB jurisdiction:* House File 888 contains changes to the Board's enabling statutes, and related repealers that would undermine the mission of the Board. These provisions prevent the Board from leading interagency work. The ability of the Board to convene interdepartmental and citizen task forces and subcommittees is instrumental in providing for interagency coordination and public participation. The Board opposes these changes.

*Changes to EQB membership:* Both Senate File 723 and House File 888 propose changes to EQB membership and criteria. Adding additional requirements for applicants would narrow the field of eligible applicants and refocus the Board away from broader environmental issues. The changes would also add

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three additional citizen members, changing the balance of Board discussions and decisions, and adding costs to an already lean budget.

These policy changes would benefit from further study and consideration. We thank you for a continued conversation on ensuring robust and geographically distributed citizen participation, and efficient environmental review.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David J. Frederickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Frederickson  
Chair, Environmental Quality Board  
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture