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Honorable Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee Members
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 18, 2021

RE: Support for Construction Code Advisory Council expansion in HF 334

Dear Committee Members,

Fresh Energy writes to offer our support for the Construction Code Advisory Council (CCAC) expansion provision in House File 334 (Frederick, Ecklund). Fresh Energy is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit that has been providing policy research and analysis on energy issues across Minnesota for over 25 years.

Throughout our history, Fresh Energy has supported a strong statewide energy code. We have served on the energy code technical advisory group for the 2018 code update and currently serve on the ongoing technical advisory group for the commercial energy code. We believe that expanding the construction codes advisory council would help to ensure that energy expertise is incorporated into the recommendations the council provides to the labor and industry commissioner.

Energy usage is a keystone function of buildings. Minnesota adopted its first energy code in 1976; today, because of innovation in the energy efficiency industry, new buildings are built 52 percent more efficiently than the 1976 code. Continuing to advance the energy code to keep pace with a rapidly emerging industry is an essential tool in meeting our state climate goals, which we are not currently on track to meet. In recent years, building performance technology has made tremendous improvements, and the energy efficiency industry has grown immensely. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, clean energy economy jobs grew 2.5 times faster than the overall economy, and the vast majority of these jobs are in the energy efficiency space. This provision provides the opportunity for government to follow where the market is going. Having this technical proficiency represented on the CCAC would help the agency understand what the industry can and cannot do, while helping Minnesotans across the state save money by reducing the short-term and lifetime costs of building operation.

Finally, the energy code exists for the benefit of all Minnesotans, including renters, under-resourced communities, and Minnesotans who pay the highest proportion of their monthly income on energy costs. Strong energy efficiency provisions increase affordability of building usage for all.

In order to move Minnesota towards meeting our climate goals, support the state's efforts to keep pace with an ever-improving industry, as well as to prevent increasing energy cost burdens for lower wealth Minnesotans, Fresh Energy supports the addition of an energy conservation expert to the Construction Codes Advisory Council.

Sincerely,
Ben Rabe

Ben Rabe, CEM
Director, Building Performance
Fresh Energy