

March 1, 2021

Rep. Jamie Long  
Chairperson  
House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee  
517 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Chris Swedzinski  
Republican Lead  
House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee  
245 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Ruth Richardson  
403 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 1592

Dear Chairperson Long, Republican Lead Swedzinski, and Rep. Richardson:

On behalf of our members, MMUA thanks you for this opportunity to comment on HF 1592, Section 3 of which seeks to establish new reporting requirements on utilities regarding diversity efforts. While MMUA supports efforts to improve opportunities for women and persons of color to work for or do business with utilities, we are concerned that the reporting requirements imposed by HF 1592 will not help find solutions to the actual challenges to increased minority hiring by and contracting with municipal utilities.

MMUA was happy to participate in the working group that was established following the introduction of similar legislation in 2019. Issues identified by the working group included a lack of a more diverse applicant pool when an opening arises within a utility, particularly in rural areas of the State. The fact that most openings require specific training and experience gave light to the fact that women and persons of color do not traditionally enroll in the necessary schooling to qualify for the jobs offered by utilities. This in turn highlighted the fact that this training is not currently offered in the core parts of the metropolitan area, potentially making access difficult for many persons of color.

While the report from the working group did not have all the answers, it did offer some ideas and encouraged further conversations. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has been a barrier to implementing suggestions from the working group and from having follow-up conversations. MMUA believes it would be a better use of resources to pursue ideas from this report rather than on annual reporting that will be time consuming and costly, particularly for small utilities, that will likely show little change year to year. MMUA also believes that the reporting requirements do not distinguish between large and small utilities, nor does it take into account hiring and contracting requirements for governmental entities that are different from those of non-governmental entities like investor-owned utilities.

Despite having reservations about the approach presented under HF 1592 for municipal utilities, MMUA does look forward to continued conversations on ways to potentially increase the diversity of Minnesota's utilities.

Sincerely,

Jack Kegel  
Chief Executive Officer

