



February 14, 2022

Re: Concerns with H.F. 2618

Dear Chair Nelson and members of the State Government Finance and Elections Committee:

The League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the opportunity to submit comments related to H.F. 2618 to the committee. An increasing number of Minnesota cities are actively promoting pollinator-friendly habitat, rain gardens, native plantings, the Lawns-to-Legumes program, and other natural landscaping options for their residents and businesses. Despite that, there are several points we would like to raise about the language proposed in this legislation.

- **State Mandates:** The mayor of every one of Minnesota's 854 cities is designated by law as the local weed inspector. They or their designated assistant are responsible for inspecting local parcels and seeing that state noxious weed law is enforced. State funds are not provided for that mandate and this language could complicate that work.
- **Local Control:** Mayors and city councils are elected to work within their communities to craft ordinances and programs to best coordinate local planning, property maintenance, state noxious weed law, environmental priorities and requirements, and determination of nuisance situations on properties. Those decisions are best left at the local level. Nothing prevents local citizens from asking their city to consider ordinances supporting or encouraging different natural landscaping, which occurs in many cities every year.
- **One Size Does Not Fit All:** Many cities have little-to-no staffing or expertise to evaluate whether natural landscaping is being properly managed, which could create tension between property owners and liability for cities in their response or lack thereof to complaints. It could also make it harder to spot and identify noxious weeds within those managed landscapes.

While we appreciate the intent of the legislation to expand the ability of property owners to opt for properly managed natural landscaping, we feel that existing procedures for local elected officials to propose, discuss, and decide changes to local ordinance related to property and landscaping are the best way to deal with these issues. Additional resources, both financial and technical, from the state to encourage that choice by property owners and cities would be welcome.

The League of Minnesota Cities will be happy to continue to work with the chair, Rep. Hansen, and the legislature as discussion of this legislation continues. Thanks again for your attention to this issue and consideration of how it could impact cities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Craig A. Johnson'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig A. Johnson
Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities