



January 10, 2021

Representative Rick Hansen
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources
Finance and Policy Committee
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairman Hansen:

The Partnership on Waste and Energy has been formed by Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington Counties to address waste management and energy initiatives as we fulfill our statutory obligation to properly manage solid waste within our jurisdiction. The early introduction and hearing for House File 30 is an encouraging development as our counties, and all Minnesota counties brace for the growing expense of responding to the Emerald Ash Borer infestation (EAB).

The EAB has now reached nearly 30 counties. Communities are struggling with how to remove and replace trees and counties are struggling with how to handle the ever-increasing volume of wood waste from this reforestation activity.

The Partnership supports both provisions in the bill which relate to providing grants to communities to manage EAB and plant a diversity of trees to restore the many values of our urban canopy. (\$3,500,000 in Section 2, subd. 6 Invasive Species and \$320,000 in Section 2, subd. 20 Transfers.)

We also strongly support the provision which grants \$700,000 to the University of Minnesota to study the statewide impacts of EAB on water, vegetation and wildlife. This is particularly urgent in North Central Minnesota where there are millions of black ash trees that will soon be in the path of the EAB.

Two other provisions that the Partnership supports – not specifically related to the EAB -- include the \$130,000 grant to divert unsold food from landfills (Section 2, subd. 7 Air Quality). This provision has the double benefit of making more food available for those in need while reducing greenhouse gas emissions as unused food decomposes in landfill facilities.

Finally, the Partnership also supports the \$193,000 appropriation for the development of eco-friendly plastics from lignin produced at the Cloquet Pulp Mill. This alternative material will lead to products which remain stable while in the marketplace but which degrade much more rapidly following their use.

Chair Hansen, we are pleased that the Committee is advancing this bill so early in the Session. We would be pleased to respond to any questions that you or any other Committee Members may have regarding the EAB infestation or the other initiatives that we support.

Sincerely,

Victoria A. Reinhardt

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy

cc: Peter Strohmeier, Committee Administrator
Commissioner Debbie Goettel, Hennepin County
Commissioner Fran Miron, Washington County