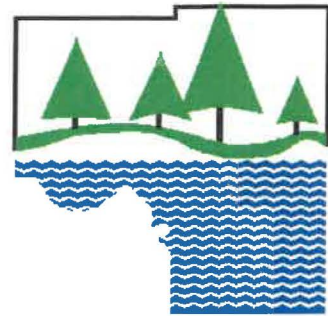


ITASCA COUNTY

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February 24, 2025

Re: Support for HF 249

Chair and Members of the House Energy Finance and Policy Committee:

I write in support of House File 249, which would make clear in Minnesota law that facilities which generate energy through the combustion of wood and timber products are defined as "carbon-free" for purposes of Minnesota's carbon free standard. I thank Representative Igo for authoring this bill, and the Committee for hearing it.

As this Committee is aware, Itasca County is home to Minnesota Power's Boswell Energy Center. Boswell has powered our region and contributed significantly to our local economy. At its peak, the plant was made up of four coal-fired generating units. Two of those units have been retired, and the other two are scheduled to cease coal generation by 2030 and 2035 respectively.

As Minnesota is on track to replace carbon-intensive fossil fuel energy sources such as coal, this bill presents a unique opportunity to create a win-win. The use of local forest products industry and forest harvest residues as biofuels is globally considered to be one of the most cost-effective and ecofriendly methods of generating renewable bioenergy. These projects can support local economies, create good jobs, and blunt the impact of tax base losses that will accompany the retirement of long-standing fossil fuel facilities.

All of this can be accomplished while meeting the State's 100% by 2040 carbon free standard for energy production. Passage of House File 249 would provide important assurance to utilities that long-term investments made in these energy sources will result in all of these objectives being advanced.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casey Venema", is written over a thin horizontal line.

Casey Venema, Chair

Itasca County Commissioner, District #5