



February 22, 2021

Representative Jamie Long
Climate and Energy Finance and Policy, Chair
517 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for Rep. Acomb's Solar for Schools bill

Chair Long and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express our organizational support for Rep. Acomb's Solar for Schools bill. Unidos MN is a grassroots statewide organization with members from Central Minnesota, Southern Minnesota, and the metro area. Our members are students, parents, educators within the latinx community and beyond. We support this bill because we believe the bill would create opportunities for our members and students, educators, and schools across the state to play constructive roles in our transition to clean energy. It does this in three ways.

First, it uses a statewide approach. By fitting the bill to work for all utilities, you're creating opportunities to participate in rural areas, suburban districts, regional centers, and urban schools.

Second, the bill ensures that at least half of the funding goes to schools where more than 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. This is a great way to make sure the program is more equitable and reaches students and communities more likely to be left behind.

Third, the school must include a plan for how the solar installation can be used as a learning tool for students, teachers, and visitors to apply for the program. If passed, this bill would contribute to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education of students across our state.

Additionally, we appreciate that developers and utilities proposing these projects will need to demonstrate a willingness and ability to pay a prevailing wage rate and meet applicable labor standards. Our members are themselves part of working families that value safe workplaces and family-supporting jobs.

Finally, we encourage the committee to consider the size of the need across the state when deciding the program's scale and duration. The bill currently does not permit applications to be submitted after December 31, 2025. According to Minnesota's Clean Energy Resource Team, sixty school districts already use solar within their district.¹ This means there are over 300 Minnesota school districts that are not.

As of 2019, there are over 2000 schools in Minnesota.² While not all of them will be able to install solar, there will likely be considerable demand for this program. We hope the funding and timing of this program will allow every interested school to participate. Our members attend schools in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Worthington, Mankato, Rochester, and Saint Cloud. We know they would love to have a chance to be part of a program like this.

We hope the committee will advance this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jose Alvillar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jose" being more prominent.

Jose Alvillar
Statewide Director of Youth Programs
Unidos MN

¹ Clean Energy Resource Teams. (n.d.). Powering K-12 Education with Solar Energy. Retrieved 2 22, 2021, from <https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solarschools>

² Minnesota Department of Education. (2019). Minnesota Education Statistics Summary 2018-2019. Retrieved 2 22, 2021, from <https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/groups/educ/documents/basic/bwrl/mdg3/~edisp/mde087765.pdf>