



**Minnesota Center for
Environmental Advocacy**

March 10, 2020

Re: *Meeting of the House Committee for the Environmental and Natural Resources Finance Division*

Testimony of Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Dear Chairman Hansen, Vice Chair Claflin, and members of the Committee:

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) is a public interest law firm and advocacy organization that has used law and science to protect Minnesota's environment and health of its people for almost 50 years. In addition to our reliance on law and science, we also rely on communities to help us address environmental issues. Our work with communities throughout Minnesota has led to a deeper understanding of the environmental impacts on the livelihood of Minnesotans, and we are continuously striving to find solutions. MCEA supports H.F. 3057 and sees it as a possible tool to protect the health of Minnesotans.

Protecting the environment is a collaborative effort, and there is a large disconnect between communities and permitted facilities in Minnesota. There is a lack of dialogue that has led to a significant amount of distrust and misinformation. People who live in close proximity to permitted facilities feel their air is being exploited and that their health is being taken for granted. We have to hold facilities with non-expiring state individual air quality permits accountable for their actions and ensure they are in compliance. Even though the permit does not expire, this does not mean a facility's activities shouldn't be questioned or that a facility is free from being held to community standards.

Once a permitted facility receives a non-expiring state individual air quality permit, people are often left in the dark about the functionality of a facility. Citizens want to understand the components of a permit, the operations of a facility, and elements of permit compliance because it has a direct impact on their lives. A public informational meeting can bridge the gap between citizens and the permitted facilities they live amongst. There is no reason for these facilities to avoid contact with their neighbors; their neighbors do not have the luxury of doing the same. These non-expiring permitted facilities' presence can be felt in the air on a daily basis, so these facilities should not be able to avoid accountability for this. Currently, there is nothing in place to allow citizens to stay informed and to keep facilities with non-expiring state individual air quality permits accountable for their activities.

Minnesotans need their voices heard when it comes to the environmental impacts of permitted facilities, and H.F. 3057 is a tool for Minnesotans to do this more effectively.

/s/ Suraya Williams
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Using the law and science to defend Minnesota's environment.

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