



MINNESOTA TEAMSTERS PUBLIC & LAW ENFORCEMENT EMPLOYEES' UNION, LOCAL NO. 320, STATE OF MINNESOTA



AFFILIATED WITH
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Brian Aldes
Secretary-Treasurer

Sami Gabriel
President

Curt Swenson
Vice President

Erik Skoog
Recording Secretary

Jill Nitke
Trustee

Brett Ohnstad
Trustee

Sara Parcels
Trustee

March 28, 2022

Representative Connie Bernardy
Chair, Minnesota House Committee on Higher Education Finance and Policy
563 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Members of the House Committee on Higher Education Finance and Policy,

As custodians, mechanics, and gardeners at the University of Minnesota who deal firsthand with the university's waste and energy consumption, we stand firmly in support of HF 4539. We see a Green Training Fund as an innovative way to advance the university's sustainability goals by providing education and support to its front-line union workforce.

We are the workers that keep the university operating smoothly by handling its waste and cleaning and maintaining the campuses. In recent years, recycling and sustainability have become central features of our daily work. Building & Grounds workers are being introduced to new composting programs; mechanics are recycling machine oil, rags, batteries and scrap metal; and land care workers are being asked to sustainability apply salt, pesticide and fertilizers.

While we support the university's efforts to decrease its waste and emissions, we are concerned that a lack of workforce training is preventing the university from effectively implementing these new sustainability measures. Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, our trainings have been reduced and moved online. Opportunities for hands-on learning are limited, as are trainings offered in languages other than English. This last point is particularly important for the hundreds of immigrant workers employed by the university.

Beyond the lack of training, there is a lack of incentivization for university employees to follow through on what they've learned in training. New sustainability measures add more responsibilities to our daily routines, but our compensation and working hours don't change. In an era when the university is losing experienced staff to higher-paying employers, it's especially important that workers are fairly compensated for the new skills and responsibilities they're asked to take on.

If the university is going to talk about waste and emissions reductions, it needs to get serious about training and incentivizing workers around composting, energy reduction, etc. The vast majority of our co-workers are not familiar with the university's sustainability goals—this bill would keep front line staff informed and help us take more pride in our work. We see this as an opportunity for the university to leap ahead of the curve, and to avoid losing the next generation of people dedicated to maintaining its state-of-the-art campuses.

Sincerely,

Christy O'Connor, Building & Grounds worker
Sara Parcels, Building & Grounds worker
Grady Johnson, Assistant Gardener

3001 University Avenue S.E.
Suite 500
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

United To Protect
www.teamsterslocal320.org



Phone (612) 378-8700
Fax (612) 331-8948
Toll Free (800) 637-5430