



City of Parks, Trees and Trails

City of Rushford

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March 11, 2024

Honorable Rep. Jay Xiong
Chair, Workforce Development Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Rep. Jay Xiong,

Subject: Support for HF3475 - Training Programs for Water and Wastewater Operators

I am writing on behalf of the City of Rushford to express our strong support for HF3475, a bill aimed at addressing the critical shortage of water and wastewater operators in our region. This legislation is essential for the sustainable development and maintenance of vital city infrastructure, and we kindly urge your support for its passage. Specifically, your approval would authorize state funding through DEED to go to the City of Austin as the local funding agent to make funds available to Riverland Community College to develop and offer both Water and Wastewater Operator Training Programs for all of Sothern MN.

In recent years, the shortage of qualified water and wastewater operators has become increasingly challenging for cities across southern Minnesota, and our region is no exception. We are witnessing a growing difficulty in attracting individuals to undergo the necessary training for Class C and Class B licenses, exacerbating the existing shortage.

Closer-to-home training programs, as proposed by this bill, offer several benefits for cities in our region:

1. **Increased Participation:** More individuals will be willing and able to enroll in training classes, helping to address the shortage of operators more comprehensively.
2. **Cost Reduction:** Reduced travel costs will significantly benefit small cities that frequently train new operators, only to see them hired by other cities. This financial relief will contribute to the sustainability of training initiatives.
3. **Local Expertise:** Proximity to training allows key city facility operators to stay closer to their respective facilities, enabling them to address unexpected service needs promptly.
4. **Immediate Impact:** By providing training locally, we can expedite the development of skilled operators who can immediately contribute to maintaining our critical water and wastewater systems.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to the positive impact HF3475 can have on our community. Thank you for your continued dedication to serving the people of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Terri Benson
Mayor
City of Rushford

Roger Knutson
Public Works Director
City of Rushford

SF 3411 Jasinski

HF 3475 Mueller

A bill for an act
relating to job training and higher education; providing grants funding to the City of Austin,
Minnesota appropriating money.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **APPROPRIATION; Department of Employment and Economic Development.**

\$350,000 is appropriated in fiscal year 2024 from the general fund to the Department of Employment and Economic Development commissioner for grants to the City of Austin for development and implementation of two job training programs: a water operator training program and a wastewater operator training program to be provided by Riverland Community College. The commissioner must not retain any portion of this appropriation.

Any unencumbered balance does not cancel at the end of the fiscal year 2025 and is available for fiscal year 2026. Any unencumbered balance at the end of the fiscal year 2026 does not cancel until June 30, 2027, and may be used for other purposes under this section.

This is a onetime appropriation. Of this amount:

(1) \$100,000 is for development of the programs and curriculum that relates to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency wastewater licensure levels for the wastewater operator training program and the Minnesota Department of Health examination levels for the water operator training program;

(2) \$100,000 is for the customized training and education department personnel at Riverland Community College campuses to recruit program designers, assist in curriculum development, recruit students and instructors, work with the other Riverland Community College departments, and collaborate with external partners;

(3) \$65,000 is for marketing development, distribution, and program outreach;

(4) \$35,000 is for administrative and overhead costs for Riverland Community College to create and administer the water operator and wastewater operator training programs;

(5) \$35,000 is for equipment for students and instructors to use in training program classes; and

(6) \$15,000 is for City of Austin expenses.