



March 6, 2024

Dear Chair Liebling and Health Finance and Policy Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HF 4096 that proposes amendments to the permits for groundwater thermal exchange devices. Expanding the permitting requirements would eliminate the barriers that currently exist to develop low-carbon district energy solutions using Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage (ATES). As a result, this amendment will help Minnesota and Saint Paul achieve our climate resiliency and energy efficiency goals in the buildings sector.

ATES technology has been utilized in Europe for over 20 years. We have an opportunity to be the first state in the US benefitting from cost-effective supply of low-carbon heating and cooling. There are significant reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with ATES. Both the Minnesota Climate Action Framework and the City of Saint Paul's Climate Action & Resiliency Plan prioritize GHG reduction targets in the buildings sector. Since 2005, GHG emissions from commercial buildings have risen 15% and the state's current goals are to reduce emissions by 50% by 2035. The city is focused on making buildings carbon neutral through conservation, energy efficiency, and energy recovery.

There is a great potential for establishing ATES systems in Minnesota, particularly in Saint Paul. These systems rely on wells utilizing below ground conditions to take advantage of the energy and energy storage potential contained in an aquifer. An ATES district system is being considered by the Saint Paul Port Authority for its redevelopment at The Heights in Saint Paul, the biggest redevelopment project in the city with the goal of being one of the first Net Zero communities in the country with a Platinum LEED for Communities certification. The Heights project is at a critical stage with infrastructure work set to commence this summer. Any delays in addressing the permitting language put the opportunity to deploy an ATES system at risk. The City is also pursuing an ATES system at the Como Zoo and Conservatory campus that could help decarbonize a portion of the campus by 2025.

The purpose of HF 4096 is to enable the permitting of this innovative geo-exchange technology and help Minnesota achieve its climate goals. It is a priority for the City of Saint Paul and that HF 4096 is passed so that Minnesota can continue to be a leader in clean energy.

Sincerely,

Russ Stark  
Chief Resilience Officer