

To: Chair Long and the Minnesota House Climate and Energy Committee

My name is Elisah VandenBussche and I'm a Chemical Engineering PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I would like to express my thanks to Representative Long and Governor Walz for their leadership on Minnesota's clean energy initiative and to express my strong support for 100% carbon free energy in Minnesota.

I've been working on clean energy technology research for the last eight years, and I'm so inspired by all the work the University of Minnesota is doing in this space. Our Institute on the Environment is recognized as a national leader on clean energy and our College of Science and Engineering has hundreds of people advancing the necessary technology. What I've learned from them is that thanks to this work here in Minnesota and similarly across the country, we have the technology for this state to be a national leader by producing 100% of our energy from carbon-free, renewable sources.

What we need now is for our state government to set a bold policy that meets the moment we are facing. The combination of the climate crisis, economic recession, public health threats, and racial and socioeconomic injustices we face in this moment is a great challenge to which we need a powerful solution. I support renewable energy because it is a cost-effective strategy and developing in this space will benefit the entire state with cleaner air, a better environmental outlook, and good jobs. The interim renewable energy targets should be strengthened and accelerated to ensure that Minnesotans are able to access the benefits of in-state renewable energy development sooner, including jobs, workforce development, cleaner air, and other economic benefits, especially to aid in economic recovery.

I also urge careful consideration of all factors, especially environmental justice, when investing in technologies to meet this goal. The benefits of decarbonization must be distributed equitably to help correct the impact of current and historic systemic injustices against Black and Indigenous people in Minnesota. This includes prioritizing emission reductions in communities overburdened by cumulative impacts of pollution and directing jobs and clean energy investments to historically impacted communities and those facing fossil fuel plant closures. It also includes removing waste incineration, which contributes to air pollution and global warming, as an eligible resource for this 100% carbon free energy standard.

In sum, this is a perfect opportunity for Minnesota to regain its position as a national leader in renewable energy. I urge you to pursue this goal boldly to protect my future and that of my children. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Elisah VandenBussche

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