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Chair Representative Frank Hornstein
House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
545 State Office Building
75 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 2904

March 31, 2022

Chair Hornstein and members of the Committee:

Science affirms that our forests and grasslands are important natural and working lands that provide multiple benefits for carbon sequestration, habitat, water quality and quantity, recreation and tourism, and much more. These benefits are important to maintaining Minnesotans' way of life. Efforts to support the maintenance, health and sustainability of our forests and grasslands are paramount.

A recent analysis conducted by The Nature Conservancy and American Forests identifies nearly 3 million acres of Minnesota lands that could support additional reforestation or afforestation. In the face of drought-killed trees, pests like emerald ash borer, and evolving forest conditions as a result of climate change, the benefits we get from Minnesota's tree cover are at risk. It is imperative we invest in one of the state's best assets: trees. State, county, city, tribal and private lands all have different opportunities and needs to support forest health and tree planting.

As the Committee considers HF2904, we would like to express our support for the activities included in the bill that will support the health of Minnesota's forests and tree cover through conservation planting assistance to private landowners under the Board of Water and Soil Resources, living snow fences through the Department of Transportation, and ash tree replacement grants to local units of government.

In addition to these programs, The Nature Conservancy recognizes there are many critical tools in the toolbox to sustain and grow the health of our forests and working lands by using a right-fit approach for each type of landowner and landscape. We encourage the legislature to consider the programs in HF2904 in addition to investments in the Badoura State Forest Nursery, reforestation, Forests for the Future, community tree planting, and private forest management.

Thank you for your consideration of investments that would benefit expanded tree planting.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Manager
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota