

January 25, 2021

Minnesota House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee Minnesota House of
Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

***Union of Concerned Scientists Support for the Energy Conservation and Optimization
(ECO) Act of 2021 (HF 164)***

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

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) is the nation's leading science-based nonprofit putting rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. On behalf of UCS's 6,800+ supporters in Minnesota, we write to express our support for the Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Act of 2021 (HF164). UCS is grateful for Rep. Stephenson's leadership in reducing and optimizing Minnesota's energy use.

Over the years, Minnesota's successful Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) has saved customers money, supported local jobs, and lowered carbon emissions and other pollutants through efforts to reduce consumption of electricity and natural gas. ECO would build on this success by including additional energy and cost saving opportunities from load management and efficient fuel switching. It would also increase the overall statewide goal for energy savings and increase or establish electricity and gas savings goals for investor-owned, municipal, and cooperative utilities. ECO will provide Minnesota residents and businesses with more opportunities to save money on their energy bills, create additional economic opportunities for local work forces, and further reduce harmful emissions from power plants.

ECO will also pave the way for a clean energy future rooted in renewable energy and equity. To best take advantage of renewable resources like wind and solar, we need to transition to an electricity system optimized for clean energy. UCS released a report last year, [*The Flexible Demand Opportunity*](#), discussing how smarter electricity use can support a clean energy future. Increased energy efficiency and savings and load management programs will enable customers and utilities to reduce electricity demand and optimize when and how we use electricity, which can maximize clean energy use while reducing the need for fossil fuels and associated costs.

In addition, ECO includes a strong focus on developing innovative technologies and on enhancing efforts to address the needs of low-income communities and households. As one example of where these areas could intersect, last year UCS published a report entitled [*Principles of Equitable Policy Design for Energy Storage*](#). ECO's provisions for innovative clean technology projects and energy conservation programs for low-income households

offer the opportunity to apply these principles in pursuit of equitable deployment of energy storage and other technologies for the benefit of all customers.

In conclusion, ECO can help expand workforce opportunities all over the state and provide residents and businesses with more opportunities to save money on their energy bills, while enabling more renewable energy to be used efficiently. While these are always important policy objectives, they are even more vital today as the COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately harmed communities exposed to fossil fuel pollution and led to substantial economic and job loss and places greater economic pressure on those already [burdened with higher amounts of their monthly income paying for energy](#). UCS supports the ECO bill's effort to advance Minnesota's leadership and progress toward a clean and equitable energy future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Gignac".

James Gignac
Senior Midwest Energy Analyst
Climate & Energy Program
Union of Concerned Scientists