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

March 4, 2021

***RE: Support for HFXXXX (Lippert)***

Dear Committee Members,

Fresh Energy is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit that has been providing policy research and analysis on energy issues across Minnesota for over 25 years. Our mission is to shape and drive bold policy solutions to achieve equitable carbon-neutral economies. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on HFXXXX (Lippert), and we write in support of this bill. HFXXXX provides more certainty for solar developers as they make decisions about solar development projects, and we are interested in continuing to work with the authors to ensure the language results in farmers and other landowners being able to diversify on-farm revenue while proceeding with solar projects that provide meaningful benefits to agriculture and soil health.

In order to meet Minnesota's decarbonization goals outlined in the Next Generation Energy Act, as well as to avoid the worst, irreversible impacts of climate change, society must drastically reduce emissions. Fortunately for Minnesota, there is an abundance of carbon-free energy resources available in solar and wind energy. When solar energy is co-located with diverse ground cover including pollinator-friendly plant species, it has the added benefits of improving soil and water quality and providing foraging habitat to gamebirds, songbirds, and native bees. Land-uses such as grazing sheep or honeybee hives can provide additional benefits and income to landowners and community members.

As the price of solar continues to fall dramatically, solar development will be a major growth opportunity for Minnesota. As such, it is critical that farmers choosing to work with solar developers have the clarity and guidance they need to make smart business decisions, and that projects are encouraged to move forward.

Sincerely,

Rob Davis  
Director of Center for Pollinators in Energy  
Fresh Energy