



House Committee on Energy and Technology Climate and Energy Finance and Policy

RE: HF4700, Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act

Contact: Christian Koch – Manager, Midwestern Policy, [ckoch@ceres.org](mailto:ckoch@ceres.org)

Thank you for considering this testimony in strong support of HF4700, Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act.

We submit this testimony on behalf of Ceres and our business members. Ceres is a sustainability advocacy organization working with some of the largest businesses and investors in Minnesota and across the country to build a cleaner energy future and a more sustainable global economy. Ceres organizes several influential business networks including the [\*Business for Innovative Climate and Energy Policy Network\*](#) (BICEP) - a coalition of over 90 major businesses - all committed to driving sustainability throughout the economy; the [\*Ceres Investor Network\*](#), with over 200 members with collectively nearly \$60 trillion in assets under management. Many of the companies in these networks have substantial operations or business interests in Minnesota such as Aveda, Franklin Energy, IKEA, Nestlé, Trane Technologies, and Siemens.

Last year, Minnesota established ambitious climate goals including full decarbonization of the state's resource mix by 2040. Currently, 51% of Minnesota's electricity comes from carbon-free resources such as wind and solar. However, in recent years due to delays in the permitting and interconnection process, the state is falling behind its neighbors in rates of deployment. A recent report found that South Dakota has increased its wind and solar deployment at nearly four times the rate of Minnesota, despite having less ambitious decarbonization goals.<sup>1</sup> To reach this goal it is critical that Minnesota ramps up the pace of carbon-free resource deployment.

Businesses know that climate risk equals business risk. When we use less emissions emitting resources to meet our electric load we improve air quality, eliminate the volatility and costs of maintaining of fossil-fuel based resources, improve public health, and reduce electric supply costs over time. Many Minnesota businesses have already made ambitious commitments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that will require beneficial electrification and distributed generation to meet their corporate suitability goals.

Despite the urgency to increase the number of clean energy projects deployed in Minnesota, permitting process times are getting longer, with on average, solar projects taking over a year to approve. This inefficient permitting process is causing further issues with transmission congestion, with projects being pulled from queues due to

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenthal, Aaron. Powering Progress: Transforming Clean Energy Permitting for a Greener Minnesota. North Star Policy Action. [www.northstarpolicy.org](http://www.northstarpolicy.org)

capacity issues.<sup>2</sup> Adopting HF4700 will help to eliminate redundant steps and increase consistencies in permitting process ensuring increased rates of deployment and more clarity on regional capacity on specific transmission lines.

For these reasons, Ceres urges the Legislature to pass HF4700 to keep moving Minnesota toward a cleaner energy future, ultimately saving residents and businesses money by making our climate a healthier place.

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<sup>2</sup> Id.



## Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association

We Move Minnesota Solar + Storage Forward

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**March 19, 2024**

Rep. Patty Acomb, Chair  
Climate & Energy Policy & Finance Committee  
State Office Building  
Saint Paul, MN

**Re: MnSEIA's support of H.F. 4700**

Dear Chair Acomb & Committee Members,

MnSEIA is a 501(c)(6) trade organization. We are completely funded, driven, and directed by a force of 165 member companies working within and throughout the solar and energy storage industries. Our members include non-profits, electric utilities, state agencies, engineering companies, financial institutions, law firms, and developers and installers of solar energy projects ranging from small electrical contractors, to large, utility-scale developers.

Our members view their work as a key and vital partnership to the state in deploying clean, reliable, and affordable energy to Minnesotans. This is why we work to ensure that Minnesota's policy and regulatory landscapes enable the financing and development of solar and energy storage projects of all scales. Without predictable and stable public policies, these clean energy projects become extremely risky and difficult to develop successfully.

MnSEIA believes that a diverse portfolio of clean energy solutions is required to reach the clean energy future the legislature has directed. With each level and scale of solar and energy storage developments come different benefits, different costs, different risks, different opposition and support, and different challenges. A mix of all clean energy technologies is important to MnSEIA members and is the best way to achieve a robust, Minnesota-based clean energy economy that competes within national and international markets.

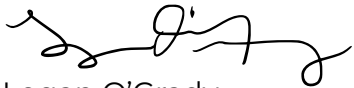
We support H.F. 4700, to streamline the permitting process for large transmission-side clean energy projects. Whatever we can do to expedite the permitting and construction process and energize more solar and energy storage quicker, the better. The better for our economy, the better for our environment, and

the better for Minnesotans who will benefit as participants and partners in our clean energy transition.

Small and mid-scale, distributed energy resources will be a vital tool in expediting clean energy deployment, but face their own sets of challenges and barriers. We look forward to working with the legislature and advocacy partners to ensure permitting reforms and interconnection policies exist to advance those distribution-side clean energy projects—including the ones operated by Minnesota's electric cooperatives.

We thank Representative Long for his leadership on this issue and look forward to this bill being signed into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Logan O'Grady". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Logan O'Grady

Executive Director

Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association (MnSEIA)

[logrady@mnseia.org](mailto:logrady@mnseia.org)

651-425-0240 (cell)



**March 20, 2024**

Dear Members of the Climate and Energy Finance & Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce representing more than 6,300 businesses and more than half a million employees throughout Minnesota, we appreciate the opportunity to provide some commentary on Representative Long's HF 4700.

The bill is intended to correct burdensome state permitting issues for wind, solar, energy storage, and transmission projects. These issues are more relevant than ever due to the state's impending carbon-free by 2040 mandate, with initial benchmarks coming up as soon as 2030.

The Chamber appreciates the acknowledgement that permitting is a barrier to the completion of critical projects in Minnesota as the cost, length, and uncertainty of our process have long been a source of concern for the business community.

In February, the Minnesota Chamber Foundation released a report on streamlining Minnesota's environmental permitting process. The report compares our permitting process to other benchmark states, quantifies the economic impact of permitting, and identifies actionable strategies that can be taken to improve the process while still maintaining our environmental standards.

The full report and a summary document can be found here: [www.mnchamber.com/permitting](http://www.mnchamber.com/permitting). As HF 4700 moves forward, the Chamber hopes that the same approach can be taken to permitting reform for economic development projects and other industries.

Sincerely,

Brian Cook  
Director, Energy and Elections Policy

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March 15, 2024

**Minnesota House**

Committee on Climate and Energy Finance and Policy  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 4700 – Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act

Dear Chair Acomb and Members of the Committee,

Citizens' Climate Lobby Minnesota (CCL MN) is a non-partisan, non-profit volunteer driven advocacy organization working to advance common ground climate, clean energy and conservation solutions. I write today on behalf of our 13 chapters and thousands of volunteers across Minnesota to support House File 4700, the Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act. In order to reduce emissions at the speed and scale required, clean energy permitting reform that will increase supply, protect our environment and allow community voices to be heard is needed. We believe the Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Act accomplishes these expectations.

Minnesotans need energy in the form of both power and heat that is clean, affordable, reliable and secure. At the same time energy demand, and especially electrical demand, is forecasted to significantly increase requiring expanded generation, transmission and distribution capacity. The current permitting system that has evolved is not capable to move at the speed and scale required to transform our energy systems to achieve an equitable carbon-neutral economy. The Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Act is a large step in the right direction.

Citizens' Climate Lobby is a national organization that talks to every office in Congress seeking to build on our shared values and find common ground political solutions. In turn CCL MN engages with our MN senators and representatives. We are aware of bipartisan interest in permitting reform at the federal level and encourage the Minnesota Legislature to also compromise to find bipartisan solutions. Permitting reform is needed at all levels of government. Advancing the Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act on a bipartisan basis would send a powerful signal across our entire state.

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Sincerely,

Greg Jason

CCL MN Statewide Team Leader



March 19, 2024

Chair Patty Acomb  
House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy  
State Office Building  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Acomb and Committee Members,

My name is Kayla Christensen, and I am the Executive Director of the Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum (MnCEF), a non-profit education and advocacy organization that promotes an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy for Minnesota. We encourage policymakers to embrace innovations in clean and affordable energy based on our conservative principles such as economic growth, property rights, personal stewardship, job growth, and national security. I am writing to you today to share MnCEF’s support for House File 4700 in its original form, which aligns with the Senate companion and reflects the buy-in and consensus from numerous stakeholders across industries.

Industries statewide are pushing for permitting reform, and energy is no different. When compared to our neighbors it is clear: Minnesota is not open for business. In July of 2023, MnCEF wrote an LTE that highlighted the frustrations of the permitting process for energy projects and potential investments in our state, noting how much of an issue this really is considering Minnesota’s 100% carbon-free by 2040 mandate enacted last year. Not long after, the PUC established a working group to develop recommendations on how the permitting process could be streamlined and improved without limiting opportunities for public input.

The working group was efficient and productive, and resulted in a list of recommendations that, when combined, can save months in the permitting process. The original bill reflects hours of collaboration and consensus amongst stakeholders, bill streamlining administrative processes, and is a great start at making the process more predictable, transparent, and efficient for developers and investors, making Minnesota competitive in the market. It will also make what is now a confusing and complicated process more accessible and understandable for the public.

We would like to thank PUC Chair Katie Sieben for facilitating the process, and to Majority Leader Long for acting on the recommendations and hard work of the working group. MnCEF encourages you to support the original language of this important piece of legislation, as it contains provisions that were supported across industries, and will allow the bill to move forward in an expedient and prudent manner. The effects of these reforms will make a tangible difference in the permitting process, getting us closer to our cleaner energy future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kayla Christensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Kayla Christensen  
Executive Director





Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum

March 20, 2024

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Committee on Climate and Energy Finance and Policy  
State Office Building, Room 200  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 4700 - Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act

Dear Chair Acomb, Majority Leader Long, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM), we write today in support of HF4700, the Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act. As participants in the stakeholder working group convened last fall by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to examine our state's permitting processes, we support the proposed permitting reforms – and view them as essential to our state's timely clean energy transition.

CEEM is an industry-led, nonpartisan, non-profit organization representing the business voice of energy efficiency and clean energy in Minnesota. We are focused on educating Minnesotans about the economic benefits of transitioning to a clean energy economy. Our business membership is comprised of over 60 clean energy companies ranging from start-up businesses to Fortune 100 and 500 corporations. CEEM stands committed to growing tens of thousands of jobs while delivering a 100% clean energy future where all Minnesota businesses and citizens will thrive.

CEEM's business members are working with utilities to build the clean energy grid of the future. A grid that is affordable, reliable, resilient, and flexible. However, for years, our members have shared that their projects are slowed down by an inefficient and unpredictable permitting process—especially when compared to the work many of them are doing in other states across the country. This has resulted in project delays and developers looking to prioritize investments in other states.

**Simply put, our permitting process is putting us at a competitive disadvantage.**

Minnesota's permitting process needs to be updated. It was established 50 years ago, and any updates have been minor and confusing band-aids to account for massive changes in technology. At a time when our state needs to add capacity to meet the expected load growth from the expansion of data centers, electrification, and to fulfill our new clean energy laws and net-zero goals, the time projects spend in the permitting process is actually getting longer.

Our business membership is asking us to help reverse this trend. The reforms in this bill are focused on eliminating redundant steps, increasing consistency across projects and technologies, and simplifying public input opportunities, all while ensuring robust environmental review for projects. These reforms will shave several months off of the permitting process. The difference of a couple of months can mean the difference of an entire year, given the seasonality of construction in Minnesota.

The reality is that time is of the essence to reach our state's 100% clean energy law. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission brought together a broad coalition of stakeholders – utilities, clean energy groups, clean energy businesses, labor unions, agricultural groups, and more – to find ways to cut out unnecessary and confusing steps in the permitting process.

We have 16 years to reach Minnesota's 100% Clean Energy by 2040 law. This proposal is a strong step towards delivering on that law while also making Minnesota a better, more predictable place to do business.

CEEM and our business members would welcome the opportunity to discuss in detail how permitting reform will make it easier to invest, grow jobs, and do business in our state as we work towards a prosperous clean energy future. Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for permitting reform.

Sincerely,



George Damian  
Director of Government Affairs  
[gdamian@cleanenergyeconomymn.org](mailto:gdamian@cleanenergyeconomymn.org)



Chandra Her  
Policy Associate  
[cher@cleanenergyeconomymn.org](mailto:cher@cleanenergyeconomymn.org)