

March 15, 2021

Chair Representative Jamie Long
Members of the Committee
House Energy and Climate Finance and Policy
State Capitol Building
St. Paul, Minnesota

RE: AURI letter of support for the Natural Gas Innovation Act, H.F. 239

Chair Representative Jamie Long:

The Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) is pleased to write this letter of support for the Natural Gas Innovation Act, H.F. 239. AURI is a non-profit corporation funded primarily by the State of Minnesota with a mission to foster long-term economic benefit for Minnesota through value-added agricultural products. AURI accomplishes this mission by developing new uses for agricultural products through science and technology, using a deliberate approach on multiple levels, including applied research, public information dissemination, building strategic collaborations among partners and by placing a strong emphasis on applications with near-term implementation plans. Renewable energy is a focus area for AURI; thus we have been following the Natural Gas Innovation Act as it makes its way through the legislature.

Using anaerobic digestion to create renewable natural gas (RNG) represents an important opportunity for Minnesota agriculture. It turns a waste stream, a problem for our agricultural communities, into a renewable energy resource and a source of revenue. AURI believes adoption of a policy which facilitates the generation, distribution and use of RNG will enable the development of anaerobic digestion sites around the state. These sites will utilize organic waste streams, created through animal production and processing operations, crop and vegetable processing sites, municipal solid waste processing facilities, and municipal wastewater processing facilities. The result being a reduction of land and water contamination, while creating high value products like RNG and fertilizer, and creating new jobs.

AURI is also interested in the potential of renewable hydrogen and ammonia to support the state's agricultural economy. Carbon-free production of ammonia has the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of agriculture in Minnesota. At the same time, renewable ammonia can serve as both an effective way to store renewable energy for extended periods of time and serve as a carrier for nitrogen for use as fertilizer. Renewable ammonia therefore has great promise for both the energy and agricultural sectors. Additionally, AURI sees potential for agricultural biomass to be utilized in creating syngas for use in renewable hydrogen and ammonia production, which creates another potential revenue channel for Minnesota producers.

Minnesota is lagging other states in providing market incentives and developing infrastructure that complete the value supply chains for innovative resources such as renewable natural gas, renewable hydrogen, and renewable ammonia. AURI believes that Representative Stephenson's Natural Gas Innovation Act is critical in accelerating these opportunities in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon M. Schlecht', is written over a horizontal line.

Shannon M. Schlecht
Executive Director