

March 6, 2024

Representative Rick Hansen  
Chair of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy

Re: HF 3738 – Lee, F.: Community tree planting grants funding provided, and money appropriated.

House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy members,

The City of Minneapolis supports HF 3738, which will appropriate much-needed funding to support tree removal and replanting on public property. By supporting this bill, the state is taking a step toward enhancing the resilience of our communities in the face of climate change.

As the invasive species Emerald Ash Borer is decimating tree canopy across the state, immediate action is needed to remove and replace these infested trees. This bill also allocates funding for planting shade trees, which is critical after a tree is removed. Trees play a pivotal role in mitigating climate change and maintaining the health of our environment and residents. Large shade trees provide several benefits including lowering temperatures in our cities to combat urban heat island effect, improving air quality, and shading our homes which can reduce energy use.

Thank you for your dedication to our shared environmental concerns facing our communities. This bill will have a positive impact in addressing the interconnected issues of tree health, climate change, and public health.

Sincerely,



Patrick Hanlon  
Deputy Commissioner: Sustainability, Healthy Homes, and Environment  
City of Minneapolis Health Department



March 5, 2024

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Metro Cities, representing the collective interests of cities in the metropolitan area, supports HF 3738 (Lee, F.), which is being heard in the Environment Committee on Wednesday.

Urban forests are an essential local infrastructure component. Dutch elm disease, oak wilt disease, drought, storms, and emerald ash borer threaten public investments in trees and controlling these issues can be greatly consequential for city budgets. Cities share the goal of the state's ReLeaf Program – promoting and funding the inventory, planning, planting, maintenance, and improvement of trees in cities throughout the state. In addition, economic and environmental gains for storm water management, climate change mitigation, air quality management, tourism, recreation, and other benefits must be protected from tree loss. A lack of timely investment in urban forests costs cities significantly more in the long run.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Lund'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mike Lund  
Government Relations Specialist  
Metro Cities

March 5, 2024

Representative Rick Hansen  
Chair, House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for H.F. 3738**

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee,

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (Partnership) is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties, formed to address waste management and energy issues. The Partnership seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy and enhance the health and resiliency of communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate.

The Partnership supports appropriations for Community Tree Planting Grants in H.F. 3738, authored by Rep. Fue Lee, to replace trees lost to forest pests, disease or storm damage and reinvigorate a climate-resilient shade tree canopy in our communities. The Partnership particularly appreciates the priority on removal and replacement of ash trees, and the focus on areas with underserved populations and environmental justice areas designated in state law where some of the greatest need for financial assistance may be found.

Meeting the emerald ash borer (EAB) challenge is one of the Partnership's priorities. Fifty counties—up from 38 counties at this time last year—are now subject to ash quarantines. Thousands of trees are lost annually to EAB. Extreme weather such as drought only exacerbates threats EAB and other pests pose to the state's trees. Local communities face limited financial resources. They need the state to step up to help recover from the compounding impacts on our community forests.

The Partnership thanks Rep. Lee for introducing H.F. 3738 and Chair Hansen for hearing this bill. We encourage the committee to act favorably on the bill to address critical community forestry needs in our communities and create a legacy on our community landscape that will be appreciated by generations to come.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Victoria A. Reinhart, Ramsey County  
Chair, Partnership on Waste and Energy