

Testimony for Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee

Meeting: Tuesday, January 31, 2023, at 3:00 PM

Chair: Rep. Patty Acomb

Regarding: HF597 (Kraft) - Grant program established to provide financial assistance to cities to address climate change, and money appropriated.

Submitted by: Gary DeVaan of the Hopkins Community Solar Garden

Representatives, Chair Acomb,

Citizens across Minnesota have been searching for ways to make their lives have less impact on the environment. Our organization, Hopkins Community Solar Garden, is a representation of that desire of ordinary citizens. People who recycle, compost, reuse and repair as much as possible in our throw away society. Everyone knows more needs to be done.

HF597 gives people of every community an opportunity to do more. With the grant program described in this bill, cities can begin to reduce the amount of carbon each city produces through a wide variety of mechanisms or combat the effects of climate change on their cities.

Cities can provide grants to residents for energy efficient appliances, home improvements like windows and insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps. Cities could even start their own community solar garden like we'd like to construct in Hopkins to give our renters and low income residence a chance to use green energy and save a little on their utility bills. While having the satisfaction that they are contributing to the solution to climate change.

Of course, this is a beginning. Funding is understandably limited. Any major projects like the projects our organization envisions for Hopkins will require many times more revenue than this grant program allows. But it's a start. There are other grants, loans, and financing for large solar projects. With the grant program HF597 provides many cities will begin to look for this financing and hopefully build more renewable energy projects or at least reduce their carbon outputs. The fact that this grant is focused on cities and small municipalities makes the people of these communities closer to the solutions they will design.

While working with Hopkins Community Solar Garden, I have talked to many citizens of Hopkins and surrounding communities. When we talk about a solar garden or installing solar on our parking ramp or our old landfill site the common response is, "that's a no-brainer" of course we should build as much renewable energy on existing developed sites as possible. People suggest other sites and question why this hasn't been done already. When they learn about solar gardens, they want to know more and how they can subscribe. There is so much desire to be part of the solution I think people are bursting for ways to participate.

We encourage the passage of this bill and expansion of this bill if the budget allows. This grant program could be the beginning of many renewable energy projects across the state.

Thank You,
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