



**CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA**

March 9, 2022

RE: HF 3858 (Boldon), HF 4115 (Jordan)

To: Chair Pelowski and Members of the Industrial Education and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of the members of Conservation Minnesota located in all of Minnesota's 87 counties, we write to express our strong support for HF 3858 (Boldon) and HF 4115 (Jordan). As an organization, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love. Safeguarding clean water is central to this goal.

HF 3858 (Boldon) provides crucial assistance to help local communities address water infrastructure needs and secure clean water access for their residents. As Minnesota experiences historic levels of budget surplus and federal infrastructure funding, our state is presented with an unprecedented, but momentary opportunity to invest in critical water infrastructure. This bill capitalizes on this opportunity, providing vital state dollars for the Water Infrastructure Fund and the Point Source Implementation Grants program, and begins matching requirements to unlock \$680 million in federal grants for the Clean Water and Drinking Water Revolving Funds.

HF 4115 (Jordan) provides necessary state investment to supplement federal funding for the Drinking Water Revolving Fund and to help local communities to pursue lead service line inventorying and removal at a meaningful level. This bill creates a Lead Service Line Replacement Grant Program, taking an important step toward alleviating the cost burden on local communities and eliminating the health impacts of lead exposure on Minnesotans and their families. And this bill sets the goal that all lead service lines are replaced statewide by 2032.

The community investments included in HF 3858 and HF 4115 arrive at time of urgent need in Minnesota, as our state faces new challenges and limited resources for wastewater infrastructure alongside increasing concern on exposure to contaminated drinking water from lead service lines.

The 2018 Infrastructure Report Card from the American Society of Civil Engineers gave Minnesota a C grade for wastewater infrastructure. The report found that the state is experiencing a significant shortfall in funding for upgrading and replacing treatment and collection systems, endangering local water resources and imposing burdens on ratepayers. This need continues to persist and worsen, especially as local communities struggle to meet the costs of addressing harmful emerging contaminants, such as PFAS. The assistance provided in HF 3858 will make a vital impact on the ability of Minnesota communities to upgrade aging infrastructure and meet the emerging and future challenges of wastewater treatment.

Minnesotans face a concurrent crisis in the fight against lead exposure. Estimates on the number of lead service lines in Minnesota range between 100,000 and 260,000, and there are lead pipes in every part of the state. Communities including Pipestone, Red Lake Falls, St. Paul and Sartell have already proposed lead pipe replacement projects. While federal funding has increased, it will not be enough to help all communities inventory and replace their lead service lines. There is no safe level of lead exposure and



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experts now agree that the only way to permanently protect drinking water from lead is to replace all lead pipes. The assistance provided in HF 4115, alongside funding unlocked by HF 3858, will help local communities remove lead lines and to fight against the harmful, permanent impacts of lead exposure on our families.

Local communities in Minnesota need our help to address critical water infrastructure shortfalls and to ensure access to clean water. Fortunately, the Legislature is in a rare position to meet this need and to provide generational community investments, creating good-paying local jobs, much needed pollution relief, and long-lasting health outcomes across the state. We urge you to take advantage of this moment and to provide the assistance that our communities need. We urge you to support HF 3858 (Baldon) and HF 4115 (Jordan). Thank you.

Sincerely,

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