



March 29, 2022

RE: HF2367 (Hornstein)

To: Chair Marquart and Members of the House Taxes 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 HF2367 (Hornstein). This bipartisan bill will increase the percentage of the Solid Waste Tax used for local recycling and waste management activities and will benefit communities in every part of Minnesota.

In 1989, the Legislature adopted a set of recycling and waste reduction laws, known as SCORE, in order to effectively manage municipal solid waste, emphasizing waste reduction, reuse and recycling. The primary outcome of SCORE was the allocation of state funding (via the Solid Waste Management Tax) for grants to counties. SCORE immediately became a pivotal part of recycling budgets, helping local communities manage solid waste, meet the state's recycling goals, and deal with hazardous waste. However, over time, SCORE grants have not kept up with needs, while the state has redirected large portions of the Solid Waste Tax to the General Fund. Today, only 20% of Solid Waste Taxes go to support county SCORE grants, even as 30% or \$27.2 million per year is diverted to the General Fund.

The diversion of Minnesota's Solid Waste Tax away from SCORE grants has limited counties' ability to meet or surpass recycling goals and deliver key benefits from waste reduction and recycling. According to the MPCA, Minnesotans are still throwing away more than 850,000 tons of recyclables, with an estimated value of \$153 million.

In the 2019 SCORE Report, the state found that the combined recycling and organics rate decreased from the prior year, falling 3.6% to 43.5% statewide. In Greater Minnesota, the report found that the combined recycling and organics rate had decreased by over 7% since 2014. And, as a result of falling recycling rates and waste-to-energy closure, statewide landfilling of municipal solid waste increased by over 250,000 tons between 2018 and 2019. In order to turn the tide, our communities need to invest in infrastructure and program changes. But at the moment, counties are being left with significant funding gaps due to Solid Waste Tax diversion at the state level.

Local programs to increase recycling and reduce waste are a vital aspect of protecting our environment and climate:

- Recycling and waste reduction programs save energy and reduce carbon emissions by avoiding the energy-intensive primary production of new products. According to the 2019 SCORE Report, Minnesota saves approximately 4.1 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent per year through recycling and waste management practices. This equates to removing annual emissions from 891,000 passenger vehicles.
- Waste reduction and recycling decreases the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators, limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Landfills, in particular, are a major source of methane emissions. According to the MPCA, food that could otherwise be recycled through organics programs makes up 18% of landfills in Minnesota, where it breaks down and produces methane gas with heat-trapping potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide.



**CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA**

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills also mitigates the long-term costs, burdens, and risks created by landfill facilities. Even with new technology, landfills require maintenance and vigilance for many decades to ensure that our lakes, rivers, and air quality are not contaminated by toxic releases.

Finally, investing in SCORE is an effective way to create expansive, multiplying economic benefits for communities in all parts of Minnesota. According to the MPCA, recycling supports more than 60,000 jobs in our state, paying almost \$3.4 billion in wages and adding nearly \$15.7 billion to Minnesota's economy. Annually, Minnesota recycling programs collect approximately 2.5 million tons of material worth over \$690 million. Recycling these materials represents major economic opportunities, and developing local recycling markets keeps these opportunities in Minnesota.

For all these reasons, we urge your support of HF2367.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen, Policy Director
David Pelikan, Policy Associate

nels@conservationminnesota.org
david@conservationminnesota.org