



April 21, 2023

Chair Olson and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

We write today to voice our support for the inclusion of the SCORE provision within HF1938, the House Tax Omnibus Bill, allocating an additional 5% of the Solid Waste Management Tax toward waste reduction.

At Conservation Minnesota, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love. Capturing the environmental and economic benefits of recycling and waste reduction is central to this goal, and additional funding for Minnesota's SCORE grants helps achieve it.

In 1989, the Legislature adopted a set of recycling and waste reduction laws, known as SCORE, to effectively manage 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 became a pivotal part of recycling budgets, helping local communities manage waste, meet the state's recycling goals, and deal with hazardous waste. However, over time, SCORE grants have not kept up with needs, and a past administration 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 \$32.5 million per year is diverted to the General Fund.

The diversion of Minnesota's Solid Waste Management Tax away from SCORE grants limits every counties' ability to meet or surpass recycling goals and deliver key benefits from waste reduction. According to the MPCA, Minnesotans are still throwing away more than 850,000 tons of recyclables, with an estimated value of \$153 million. To turn the tide, our communities need to invest in infrastructure and program changes. But currently, counties are being left with significant funding gaps due to the Solid Waste Management Tax diversion. The partial inclusion of HF1785 within HF1938 takes a step toward fixing this diversion and redirects SCORE grants to counties to help pay for local recycling programs.

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 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 produces methane gas with heat-trapping potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide.
- 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 for decades.

Finally, investing in SCORE is an effective way to create multiplying economic benefits for all Minnesota communities. 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 these reasons, we thank members and respectfully urge support for the continued inclusion of the updated Solid Waste Management Tax allocation in HF1938, the House Tax Omnibus Bill.

Sincerely,

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