

March 1, 2023

Dear members of the House Sustainable Infrastructure Committee,

My name is Sam Olbekson. I am an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation of Minnesota Ojibwe and am serving as the 2023 president of the American Institute of Architects Minnesota. On behalf of our more than 2,300 architects and design professionals, I am writing in support of House File 749, which incorporates resilience considerations into our sustainability guidelines for public buildings and specifically calls out operating costs as an important consideration when determining lowest cost/highest efficiency technology.

At both the national and state levels, the American Institute of Architects is deeply committed to designing a more resilient built environment. The increasing destructiveness and frequency of natural disasters poses ever greater risks to lives and property. Additional efforts are needed to address the grave effects of climate change.

Because the Sustainable Building Guidelines have proven highly effective in improving the energy efficiency and sustainability of our public buildings over the years, we believe that adding resilience considerations to these guidelines is an excellent way to create new data on resilience, provide public building owners and operators with information about how to increase the resilience of their projects, and enhance the understanding of the interconnectedness of energy efficiency and resilience considerations. What design and construction professionals learn about low lifetime cost/high efficiency strategies while working on public projects is used to inform their work on private sector buildings, which provides benefits well beyond our public buildings. We have no doubt that the inclusion of resiliency guidelines will provide the same opportunity to take what is learned and use it to build better, longer-lasting buildings across the construction spectrum.

AIA Minnesota also applauds the inclusion of operating costs in provisions that require lowest cost/highest efficiency considerations. For too long, we have focused only on the first costs of new technology, not creating mechanisms to consider the life cycle and operating cost savings that typically accompany the adoption of energy efficient mechanical systems, building envelopes, and other technologies. Creating a deeper understanding of life cycle ROI will encourage adoption of newer, more efficient technologies and is a better use of taxpayer dollars long-term.

We have run out of time to wait to incorporate resilience and long-term impacts into our public design and operating considerations. Please advance House File 749 to help us improve our built environment for the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,



Sam Olbekson, AIA, AICAE, NOMA
President, AIA Minnesota
Founder and CEO, Full Circle Indigenous Planning + Design

cc: Representative Liz Reyer