

February 21, 2022

To: Chair Rick Hansen
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee



Re: HF3598 (Hansen) Dear Chair Hansen and Committee Members:

Representing the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee, a statewide 400+ member organization charged with supporting and advocating for a more diverse and sustainable urban tree canopy, we write to express our strong support for HF 3598 (Hansen). This bill takes critical and timely steps to assist communities with rebuilding our urban tree canopy in order to create a more climate resilient Minnesota.

Emerald ash borer

Minnesota has been battling the invasive pest, emerald ash borer (EAB) for over a decade. Communities across the state are facing significant losses to their urban tree canopy due to this pest. With the loss of these trees, comes the loss of critical environmental services such as carbon sequestration, storm water mitigation, improved air quality and reduction of the urban heat island effect, to name a few.

Funding to support the management of the EAB, provided via this committee has been a critical first step in assisting communities with the daunting task of managing their urban forests in the face of this voracious pest. While this funding has made great strides in encouraging communities to take on the task of actively managing (via removal or preservation) 20-40% of their tree canopy, the urgency of removing these potentially dangerous trees often depletes resources also needed to grow the next generation of trees for future Minnesotans to enjoy.

Compounding catastrophe

The compounding catastrophe of significant tree loss and weather extremes such as last year's drought, creates a unique challenge for those who are responsible for ensuring the environmental benefits provided by our tree canopy. The funding proposed in HF3598 recognizes the dual effort required to provide timely support for managing a significant invasive pest as well as the critical resources necessary to rebuild our urban forests. This bill will ensure our next generation of climate-critical green infrastructure not just survives, but thrives.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Zumach

Karen M. Zumach
President, MN Shade Tree Advisory Committee
651.334.3726



February 21, 2022

Re: Support for provisions of H.F. 3598

Dear Chair Hansen and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee:

The League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the opportunity to submit comments related to H.F. 3598 to the committee. Subdivision 2 of the proposal addresses key drought impacts through funds directed to the Department of Natural Resources. The League appreciates the support that the author and the administration have shown for city needs in the development of this proposal and supports the funding proposed in subdivision 2.

All four of the line items funded in this subdivision are important to Minnesota cities. Drought conditions in 2021 put strain on many city water supplies, which created the need for the funds in subdivisions 2(a) and 2(b) for situations where well interference appeared due to declining groundwater levels and for accelerated efforts to improve water efficiency by public water suppliers. In addition, state efforts to remediate the damage being done by emerald ash borer (EAB) received a major setback due to the extreme drought conditions experienced by young trees. The Department expects that a substantial number of those trees will need to be replaced and that the need for tree removal and replacement will be escalated where trees were weakened by the drought. The funding in subdivision 2(c) and 2(d) provides badly needed support for that increased need.

We would respectfully ask that the committee support the inclusion of the items identified in subdivision 2 as it develops its supplemental budget. Thank you for your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig A. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig A. Johnson
Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities