

March 21, 2023

Minnesota House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy
200 Minnesota State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Thank you Chair Acomb, and House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Members for providing this opportunity for written testimony today,

I am a volunteer with MN350's Clean Transportation Team and I am writing to express my support for House File 2502 (Hanson).

For the past year now, I and my colleagues on the Clean Transportation Team have been working with school transportation directors around the state trying to convince them to apply for the \$1 billion in federal money that would fund most, if not all, of the cost of electric buses. While some of the districts have shown an interest, most of them decided not to apply. The result was, that for the first round of funding, Minnesota received money for only four electric school buses from the EPA's Clean School Bus Program. Every other state around Minnesota received more (South Dakota received seven!) and Michigan 100.

This was incredibly disappointing to me, personally. I couldn't even get my home district, Roseville, to apply despite the fact that the school board chairman came to one of our events and took a ride on an electric school bus. I have been writing about, talking about, and worrying about climate change since 1988. I was a little skeptical of the theory at first but by 1994, it was clear that the scientists were right and even underestimating the effects. And still, the United States has been slow to make the necessary changes. As many of you know, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change announced Monday that the world would fail to meet the first milestone for cutting dioxide emissions and the world temperature will increase by a very dangerous 1.5 degrees centigrade. We must use every means at our disposal to keep cutting carbon dioxide pollution.

The money from the Inflation Reduction Act is the most dramatic step the United States has taken to fight global warming. What I have learned in talking to transportation officials in Roseville, Little Falls and Worthington is they don't apply for two reasons. First, they don't own the school buses, but rather contract with a company to provide transportation for students. I would urge you to make it clear in H.F. 2502 that private bus companies are included in the bill.

Second, the districts are hesitant to commit any of their money, even if they win a grant from the EPA that would provide approximately 75 percent of the cost of a new electric bus and charging station. This bill would eliminate one more excuse from the recalcitrant school districts.

I truly believe that climate change is the greatest threat to the world since the build-up of nuclear missiles in the 1960s. The nations came together to dramatically reduce the number of nuclear missiles. I hope you will pass H.F. 2502 and be part of the effort to dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Sincerely,

Chuck Laszewski
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