

February 8, 2021

RE: Better Buildings Legislation to advance the Minnesota commercial building energy code

Honorable Members of the Climate and Energy Finance and Policy Committee,

The undersigned cities are writing in support of legislation that would advance and accelerate commercial building energy standards so that the State of Minnesota is better positioned to meet its statutory greenhouse gas reduction goal of 80% by 2050. Likewise, better building energy standards will help cities to meet our own local climate and energy targets. Together, our coalition of cities represents more than 1.14 million Minnesotans and contains more than 590 million square feet (33%) of commercial building space.

Buildings consume an enormous amount of energy and are a leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2017, Minnesota's building sector made up 40.6% of the total energy consumed in the state, of which roughly half was from within the commercial buildings sector, including high-rise multifamily buildings.

Improving building efficiency is one of the most impactful and cost-effective ways state and local governments can enhance the comfort and health of people, reduce costs for building owners, and make progress toward climate goals. However, in most cases, state law prohibits municipalities from deviating from the state energy code. Therefore, cities must rely on the state to implement energy codes that are up to date and consistent with state and local climate and energy goals.

In December 2020, the Department of Labor and Industry and the Department of Commerce released a report titled [Improving building energy efficiency in commercial and multifamily construction](#). With input from experts and stakeholders, the report recommends instituting a framework for the statewide commercial building energy code that ensures that all new commercial and large multifamily construction is net-zero by 2036. The undersigned cities support this recommendation.

Absent adequate state and federal policy, climate action is increasingly driven at the local level. More than two dozen Minnesota cities have energy goals and at least eight cities have adopted climate action plans. The negative impacts of climate change are being felt in Minnesota and disproportionately affect vulnerable households and overburdened communities. Any further delay to updating the energy standards sets emissions targets back for the decades-long life of the buildings.

The cities that have signed this letter support legislation that will drive better building construction through advanced and accelerated energy standards.

To date, the following cities have signed on to support this effort:

City of Duluth	City of Morris
City of Eden Prairie	City of Northfield
City of Edina	City of Rochester
City of Golden Valley	City of St. Louis Park
City of Minneapolis	City of Saint. Paul