

100%

100% Campaign
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February 16, 2022

Chair Long, Rep. Bierman, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our support for Rep. Bierman's BE 162 / HF XXX.

From Red Wing to Red Lake, from the East Side of Saint Paul to East Grand Forks, all Minnesota families deserve warm, affordable, and safe places to live. Unfortunately, not all families can afford to make their homes cleaner and more energy efficient. This is true for both homeowners and renters, for single family homes and multifamily homes.

Minnesota's Weatherization Assistance Program is a reliable program with a long track record of success improving the homes of Minnesotans who are eligible for our Energy Assistance Program. The program's reach, however, has been limited by statutory restrictions and logistical challenges that we are well positioned to overcome in 2022.

The Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams has estimated that in 2017 there were 498,000 Minnesota households that were eligible for energy assistance. Of those, in 2017, only 1,700 received Weatherization Assistance. At this rate, it would take 291 years to improve every eligible home in Minnesota.

Fortunately, Rep. Bierman's BE 162 / HF XXX takes on five of the challenges that are holding Minnesota back.

First, it allows grants to be made for pre-weatherization. According to Minnesota's report on its 2019 activities to the Department of Energy, 47% of the homes that are evaluated for weatherization services were denied services due to structural deficiencies that need to be remediated through pre-weatherization. Due to federal restrictions, existing weatherization funds cannot be used for this purpose. This proposed change would make more homes ready more quickly, speeding up the improvements Minnesotans urgently need.

Second, it makes the weatherization of multifamily homes easier. The bill would allow our state grants to be used even if a multifamily project is not completed during the same federal fiscal year it began.

Third, it allows grants to be made for outreach to families. To ensure eligible families across the state can access this program, this bill would provide support for outreach, application assistance, and translation services.

Fourth, it will help develop a ready workforce able to provide the pre-weatherization and weatherization services Minnesotans need at the scale and in the places where Minnesotans need them. It does so by creating a Weatherization Apprenticeship Grant Program.

Fifth, it fosters an interagency and multi-stakeholder approach that will make the program a success. For example, the Weatherization Apprenticeship Grant Program will coordinate the work of three state agencies to provide employers with support for training apprentices for in-demand jobs, especially the programs that are funded through a combination of non-state and in-kind sources.

Rep. Bierman's bill addresses a long-overdue need just in time for Minnesota to make significant progress on home weatherization across the state. According to the December 2021 estimate of the Office of Senate Counsel, Research, and Fiscal Analysis, Minnesota can expect to receive \$144.8M in new funds for the Weatherization Assistance Program. With the additional support being proposed in this bill, our state would be well-positioned for a breakthrough on home weatherization.

Thousands of Minnesotans are ready for the warm, affordable, and safe homes that this bill would help provide. Please support BE 162 / HF XXX.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Conry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Conry
Campaign Director
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