

February 7, 2023

Dear members of the House Sustainable Infrastructure Policy 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 1135, which funds research on the impact of extreme weather events on Minnesota's built environment. The research proposed in HF1135 will create the foundation of region- and community-specific data that architects and architectural designers need to be able to address resilience in the design of built structures in Minnesota.

By law and by licensure, architects are required to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public in the context of the built environment. To do so, we need to both respond to the changes we've already experienced in Minnesota's climate and weather events, and also pragmatically anticipate and design for the changes that are on the horizon. Buildings designed today are usually focused on a lifespan of at least 40 years. To design and build structures that stand the test of time, we need better, regionally specific data. Building owners of all sectors and Minnesota taxpayers will benefit from strengthening the efficacy of their investments in new and existing built spaces, in this context.

The impacts of climate change and extreme weather events are significant, and must be designed for on every built project, no matter the location. All Minnesota communities will benefit from a data-driven resilience strategy that protects community resources. Lower-income communities may particularly benefit from Minnesota-specific data that is publicly produced and made available to them.

Strengthening the resilience of our buildings and communities is a top priority of our organization, nationwide. To further this priority, AIA has partnered with federal agencies and worldwide organizations, including the more than 50 members of the Resilience Building Coalition who have signed onto the Building Industry Statement on Resilience. Advancing resilience and adaptive capacity in local communities is the focus of this coalition effort, and we believe this is best achieved through investments in research, education, response efforts, and comprehensive planning.

We believe that the investment in research proposed in HF1135 is essential to our ability to design a built environment that is ready for what's ahead. The researchers and research infrastructure within the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment are perfectly positioned to conduct this research. Please pass this bill to support the important work of making Minnesota's built environment more resilient for the generations of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,



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

cc: Representative Fue Lee