



March 1, 2023

Dear members of the House Sustainable Infrastructure 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 2170, which creates global warming impact standards for construction materials used in public projects.

AIA Minnesota supports efforts to achieve healthy built and natural spaces by promoting non-toxic building materials and supports the preference of products from manufacturers who have chosen to disclose the contents of their products transparently. Construction materials can significantly contribute to a project's overall carbon footprint through embodied carbon, and the production of those products also has an impact on our climate at a broader scale.

As the market for clean materials matures, we are seeing costs go down and options go up. The Buy Clean Buy Fair Act will further drive market adoption of healthier materials that reduce our climate impact and potentially drive down prices even further. Creating standards, product lists, and data reports will inform and empower developers of both public and private sector projects to make choices that have a lower impact on the future of our planet.

One of the many positives of choosing materials that are likely to be selected under these rules is that many of them are healthier for building occupants. Low-chemical paints and finishes, more efficient windows and envelopes that reduce drafts, and other products can improve user comfort and health.

Creating an environmental standards procurement task force to look at issues of implementation is an important piece of this proposal. Bringing together experts to determine how this program can operate most successfully, and looking specifically at things like financial incentives and how other states are handling “buy clean” efforts, will ensure we move forward in an intentional and informed way. AIA Minnesota’s members are ready and willing to take part in that process. We also appreciate the bill includes both a waiver process and grants to assist Minnesota-based manufacturers, to provide some flexibility as the program gets underway.

We look forward to working within the pilot and long-range projects advanced by this bill and urge the committee to support its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sam Olbekson".

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

cc: Representative Kaela Berg