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Testimony of Susan F. Arnold, Ph.D., MSOH, CIH
Committee on State and Local Government Finance and Policy
Proponent of H.F. Bill 4231
March 14, 2024

Chair Klevorn and members of the Committee on State and Local Government Finance and Policy,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Bill 4231, A bill for an act relating to local government; authorizing amortization of certain property uses; amending Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 462.357, subdivision 1c.

I offer the following in support of this bill. In 2008, a team of industrial hygienists from the Division of Environmental Health Sciences at University of Minnesota School of Public Health conducted a study of worker exposures at the Smith Iron Foundry. I was a member of that team. Our study determined that:

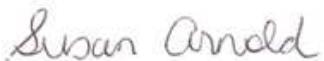
- Major sources of emissions in the foundry were uncontrolled, resulting in the release of toxic chemicals such as heavy metals, respirable dusts and crystalline silica into the workplace air that result in unacceptably high worker exposures. For example, the levels of crystalline silica were on average, 10 times the OSHA Permissible Exposure Limit (OSHA PEL). Silica causes irreversible fibrotic lung diseases including silicosis that is ultimately fatal. It has been classified as a human carcinogen the National Toxicology Program NTP) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The dusts and heavy metals are associated with a number of diseases including asthma and heart disease.
- The iron foundry doors open at frequent intervals for the forklift that brings bulk materials to enter and deliver them into the production areas. Without emission controls, these toxic contaminants accumulate on work surfaces and then spill into the surrounding community through the open doors.

Our observations of the workplace conditions, operations and sampling results are consistent with the recent EPA reports and OSHA violation citations, demonstrating that, 16 years later, the Smith Iron Foundry has yet to adequately control these toxic emissions.

Due to the nature of the work and work processes in this 100 year-old building, installing the necessary engineering controls on these sources so that they effectively control chemical emissions would be complex and costly and likely cost prohibitive. The Smith Iron Foundry not only exposes its workers to unacceptably high exposures of toxic chemicals, it adds to the unfair burden borne by this EJ community by allowing these chemicals to escape from its premises and contaminate the surrounding neighborhoods. Therefore, I strongly support this bill as a means of eliminating these toxic emissions and exposures.

Thank you for considering this bill. Please support this bill.

Sincerely,



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