**RE: SF4091 Omnibus Jobs, Energy, and Commerce Bill** May 16, 2022

To: Chair Pratt, Chair Noor, and Members of the Conference Committee on HF4366

On behalf of the members of Conservation Minnesota located in all of Minnesota’s 87 counties, we write to share our strong support for provisions considered for inclusion in the final version of SF4091, the Omnibus Jobs, Energy, and Commerce Bill. As an organization, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love, and we’re hopeful that you’ll join us in this effort by passing a productive, common-sense bill to promote a sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy transition here in our state.

Despite obvious differences between Senate and House versions of the Omnibus, we believe that the Conference Committee has a long list of available provisions that can serve to safeguard our energy future and the people who rely on it, delivering a necessary catalyst to drive accelerated market innovation and expansion. We have a unique opportunity to provide the push that Minnesota needs to move toward emissions and cost reductions, and we believe that the following provisions, among others, are worthy of bipartisan support in accomplishing this goal.

**Solar for Schools, Solar on Public Buildings, National Sports Center Solar Array**

Wind and solar represent the cheapest sources of energy in the world – beating out gas, geothermal, coal and nuclear power. As energy costs rise across the country, our state can invest in long-term affordable energy by expanding our solar footprint. Investment in solar installation on schools and public buildings, in particular, allows for much-needed fiscal and environmental responsibility for taxpayer-funded operations. By approving solar installation provisions in SF4091, the state can set a prominent example in responsible energy investment.

**Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and Assistance**

EVs present a significant opportunity to decrease both emissions in the transportation sector and fuel costs for drivers. As consumer interest in EVs rises, we can ensure that these vehicles are a viable option for every Minnesotan by investing in the infrastructure and assistance necessary for market expansion. Provisions available to the Conference Committee include (1) Auto Dealer EV Certification Grants; (2) EV Charging Stations at County Facilities, (3) State and Regional Parks, and (4) Highway Rest Areas; (5) Residential Electric Panel Upgrade Grants; and (6) EV-Ready Building Codes. Each of these provisions help to guarantee the reliability and ease-of-use for cost-saving electric vehicles, providing support for consumer choice.

**Weatherization Assistance Program**

Weatherization assistance presents a substantial win-win opportunity for Minnesotans. In the face of rising energy costs and lagging carbon reductions, weatherization provides efficiency investments that reduce excess energy usage, saving money for residents and decreasing the carbon footprint of built infrastructure. Minnesota has fallen behind other states in its weatherization efforts, but funding proposed in SF4091 allows the state to utilize and complement federal funding en route to delivering key benefits for consumers.

**Community Energy Transition Grants**

As we advocate for a necessary energy transition, it is especially important to consider the impacts of this transition on communities supported by energy facility retirement. A just transition requires that we find sustainable futures for the workforces and local communities that may be affected by market progress. Community Energy Transition Grants help to encourage local economic development, supporting an effective energy transition that benefits all Minnesotans.

**Minnesota Innovation Finance Authority, Renewable Integration and Demonstration Grants**

Our energy future will, in part, rely on the market’s ability to supply innovative, expansive technologies that decrease costs for consumers and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, Minnesota’s inability to meet emissions reduction goals underlines a need for market investment and acceleration. The Minnesota Innovation Finance Authority and Renewable Integration and Demonstration Grants can strengthen progress by catalyzing and encouraging new market-led solutions, particularly in clean energy innovation and grid-strengthening technology. Public-private partnership is an important tool for bolstering energy transition, and these provisions serve to build that partnership.

**State Competitiveness Fund for Federal Funding Leverage**

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, or the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed in 2021 offers generational investment in energy solutions across the sector. However, capturing this funding requires Minnesotan entities to meet federal match requirements. The State Competitiveness Fund allows the state and eligible grantees to meet these requirements and to pursue and administer these funds. Minnesota taxpayers have already paid for these investments via federal taxes. It’s the responsibility of the State to use this provision to ensure that these funds benefit Minnesotans, rather than to leave money on the table.

**Buy Clean Task Force**

A vital aspect of the clean energy and efficiency transition in Minnesota is the assurance of sustainable, local supply chains and workforce development. Buy Clean, Buy Fair initiatives help to reduce emissions in materials acquisition *and* to incentivize local production. We can reward Minnesota producers who invest in environmentally friendly practices and strong labor conditions by using a common-sense process for construction materials acquisition. The Buy Clean Task Force allows the State to engage with stakeholders and develop effective pathways for future implementation of these initiatives.

Due to strong public support for sustainability and a rare but substantial budget surplus, we believe that this Conference Committee has the opportunity and the capacity to advance meaningful, cost-effective provisions that responsibly and efficiently accelerate the energy transition. Together, this Committee can turn the tide on our state’s lagging achievement of energy goals while providing much-needed, long-term cost reductions for Minnesotans. We appreciate your consideration, and we remain committed to supporting a strong, bipartisan Omnibus.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us with any questions/concerns.

Thank you for helping to protect the Minnesota we love.

Sincerely,

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