RE: HF 4115 (Jordan) March 30, 2022

To: Chair Liebling and Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of the members of Conservation Minnesota located in all of Minnesota’s 87 counties, we write to express our strong support for HF 4115 (Jordan). This bipartisan bill puts Minnesota on a path to finally removing all lead service lines – statewide – by 2032. As an organization, we work to protect the people and places that Minnesotans love – and providing safe drinking water is central to this goal.

HF 4115 provides the necessary state investment to help local communities map and inventory lead service lines. Estimates on the number of lead service lines in Minnesota range between 100,000 and 260,000 – but the exact number is yet to be determined. Many community water suppliers admit that lead service lines are likely providing drinking water to older homes in their communities. However, comprehensive mapping and inventorying of lead service has not been accomplished. Community water suppliers need state assistance to be sure of the exact number of lead service lines.

The bill also creates a Lead Service Line Replacement Grant Program, taking an important step toward alleviating the cost burden on local communities by supplementing federal funding from the Drinking Water Revolving Fund. A portion of the new federal infrastructure funding will be grants addressing lead service lines, but some funding must be loans; and we know not every community has the resources necessary to apply for and pay back loans. HF 4115 uses state dollars to cover the costs of the federal loans so that all communities can replace all lead service lines with safer alternatives. And this bill sets the goal that all lead service lines are replaced statewide by 2032.

We know there are lead service lines in every part of the state. Communities including Pipestone, Red Lake Falls, St. Paul and Royalton have already proposed lead pipe replacement projects. While federal funding has increased, it will not be enough to help all communities inventory and replace their lead service lines. There is no safe level of lead exposure and experts now agree that the only way to permanently protect drinking water from lead is to replace all lead pipes. The assistance provided in HF 4115 will help all Minnesota communities remove lead lines and to fight against the harmful, permanent impacts of lead exposure.

Local communities in Minnesota need our help to ensure access to safe drinking water. Fortunately, the Legislature is in a rare position to meet this need and to provide significant community investments, create good-paying jobs, protect children, and improve health outcomes across the state. We urge you to take advantage of this moment and to provide the assistance that our communities need. We urge you to support HF 4115. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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