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March 15, 2023

Representative Fue Lee
Chair, House Capital Investment Committee
458 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Lee and Members of the House Capital Investment Committee:

I write today on behalf of the Prairie Island Indian Community (“PIIC”) in strong support of House File 2180. House File 2180 would appropriate \$47,700,000 to the Zumbro Sanitary District to construct a new regional wastewater treatment for the cities of Goodhue, Wanamingo, Pine Island, and Zumbrota.

PIIC supports this legislation because it owns what’s commonly referred to as the “Elk Run Property,” which sits just north of Rochester adjacent to the City of Pine Island. PIIC made the hard decision to purchase land away from its current reservation because of the trifecta of threats the community faces. First, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed Lock and Dam No. 3 in the 1930s downstream from PIIC and it flooded a portion of the community’s land. The dam exacerbates spring flooding, which continues to threaten PIIC’s infrastructure. Second, the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant was constructed in the 1970s and spent nuclear waste currently sits approximately 700 yards from community housing. Third, freight rail tracks bisect the one reliable road on and off the reservation. Freight rail carries hazardous materials and, if there were ever an accident that blocked the intersection, community members and guests could be trapped on the reservation. Lastly, our current land base doesn’t support the need for housing for community members.

In order for our community to continue to grow and thrive, we are looking to future development on the Elk Run property and up-to-date infrastructure, such as a modern wastewater treatment facility, is crucial for both the surrounding communities and our future plans.

For the reasons mentioned above, we would ask that you support funding for the Zumbro Sanitary District in House File 2180.

Sincerely,

Johnny Johnson
Tribal Council President