

February 2, 2023

Greetings Committee Members –

My name is Ross Widmoyer and I am President & CEO of Faribault Mill, a small business in south central Minnesota that employs more than 100 people. Our company was founded in 1865 and we are the longest standing manufacturer in the state.

I would like to express my opposition to HF2. As an employer that's created new jobs in Minnesota (we've doubled employment at our company since the beginning of the pandemic), I'm keenly aware of concerns my team members have regarding unexpected emergencies related to personal or family illness. To that end, our company has voluntarily enhanced employee benefits the past three years, including increased hourly wages, generous and extended paid-time-off accruals, affordable health insurance as well as short-term and long-term disability insurance, and supplemental paid time off for a family emergency. We've done this voluntarily to recruit and retain a talented workforce in a hyper-competitive labor market. We've also done this because it's the right thing to do for our employees.

The proposed mandate in HF2 creates excessive and unnecessary burdens for small businesses in our state, as well as another tax burden on employers and employees alike. Small businesses like mine typically have "single points of failure" across the many steps of our manufacturing process, meaning when one subject matter expert leaves for an extended period, our production line slows or potentially stops altogether. If an employee were to take paid leave for the extended periods of time allowed under this bill (as much as 24 weeks), and we as an employer were required to hold their position during that same time, our manufacturing could stall or stop for weeks and/or months. Moreover, finding and properly training a suitable replacement would be incredibly difficult given the current labor and workforce shortages in Minnesota.

In summary, the mandate proposed is unnecessary, excessive and represents potential harm to employees and employers alike, especially small businesses.

Many thanks for your service to our state. As you continue to consider this legislation, and the impact it has on small business in Minnesota, I'd be happy to answer any further questions.

Sincerely,

Ross Widmoyer
President & CEO
Faribault Mill