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January 29, 2019

Dear members of the House Environment Policy Committee,

On behalf of the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (GMPT) organization, we are writing you to urge passage of H.F. 133. GMPT is a non-profit membership organization made up of more than 125 cities, counties, non-profits, a tribal nation, and businesses who support parks and trails located outside the metropolitan area. Our members strive to provide quality local and regional recreational opportunities for all Minnesotans throughout the state.

Whether state, regional or local, Minnesota has some of the best parks and trails in the United States. Access to those parks and trails plays an important role in Minnesota being consistently ranked as one of the healthiest states in the country. Our parks and trails also play an important role in our state's economic development.

The challenge we face now is a common one throughout the country. Childhood obesity is on the rise. Opportunities for indoor recreation, such as video games, are increasing exponentially. That's why it is so important that our children spend time outside and in nature. If children develop a love for spending time outdoors when they are young, that will continue through the rest of their lives.

H.F. 133, also known as No Child Left Inside, would create a grant program to provide grants for environmental and natural resource based educational programs aimed at getting children outdoors. This program would help encourage that life-long love of outdoor recreation that is so important to who we are as Minnesotans.

In closing, we offer our thanks to Rep. Jamie Becker-Finn for introducing this legislation and we urge the committee to move this important bill forward. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted Suss".

Ted Suss
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Nigbur".

Mike Nigbur,
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails