March 2, 2022

RE: HF1806 (Lippert)

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

On behalf of the members of Conservation Minnesota located in all of Minnesota’s 87 counties, I write to express our strong support for HF1806 (Lippert). At Conservation Minnesota, we advocate for the funding and the policies at the State Capitol that help every Minnesotan and every Minnesota community enjoy clean air, clean water, and the great outdoors.

Our organization thanks Rep. Lippert for authoring HF 1806 and shedding light on the issue of contaminated private drinking water wells. The Minnesota Department of Health estimates 1.2 million Minnesotans get their drinking water each day from a private well. There are a number of contaminants that can be concerning in these wells. Some of those contaminants are caused by the natural geology of an area, like arsenic. Other contaminants are caused by human activity, like PFAS or nitrate. Regardless of cause, many private well users are forced to face harmful exposure or burdening costs of testing and remediation – through no fault of their own.

Testing has proven to be an important tool in the fight against harmful contaminants. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has already started identifying vulnerable areas of the state where nitrate pollution is most likely. Previously, MDA’s Township Testing Program helped inform the recent Groundwater Protection Rule that was discussed at the legislature and eventually implemented by MDA in 2019. In the case of private wells, we believe that widespread testing can again lead to meaningful progress and state-supported remediation.

In addition to testing and remediation, our organization recommends that the causes of contamination in private drinking wells be better addressed with broad state policies to improve crop fertilizer utilization, to bolster land use practices, and to reach a point at which all private wells are no longer contaminated by human activity on the land. I would encourage committee members to ask Rep. Lippert about the other bills he has signed onto to help improve agricultural conservation practices across Minnesota and prevent harmful contaminants at their source.

It has been a longstanding goal of Conservation Minnesota that every Minnesotan and every Minnesota community have affordable access to safe drinking water in their homes and in their communities. By providing widespread testing and supporting remediation for contaminated private wells, HF 1806 takes a necessary step toward this goal. We urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen

Policy Director