

Chair Rena Moran  
House Ways & Means Committee  
449 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Soil and Water Conservation Aid Program in [HF 3669](#)

April 27, 2022

Dear Chair Moran and committee members,

As the Committee considers HF 3669 the House Omnibus Tax bill, we thank Chair Paul Marquart, Chair Cheryl Youakim, Representative Reyer, and the Tax and Property Tax committees for their bipartisan support of Soil and Water Conservation District Aid which is included in the bill. The \$22 million in annual aid to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) would create a local government aid program in the Dept. of Revenue to provide funding for SWCDs from the general fund. SWCDs are essential partners in protecting and restoring Minnesota's waters, habitats, forests, and the resilience of Minnesota's agricultural lands. SWCDs provide essential services to landowners for land and water conservation across the state.

In their work, SWCD staff engage directly with farmers, foresters, other local governments, and landowners to make cleaner water and healthier soils a reality by helping to:

- identify problems,
- provide technical assistance and design solutions,
- find financial support, and
- implement soil and water conservation projects and practices.

As you can see, SWCDs are the "boots on the ground" for working with landowners to achieve state conservation goals, a critical and valuable role.

It is with this role in mind that we have been advocating for a stable, sufficient, and long-term funding source for SWCDs. Consistency of funding is also crucial to allow SWCDs the ability to engage in long-term planning and relationship-building more deeply. Time is a key element that is necessary to strategically pursue opportunities to advance conservation goals. Securing their funding through local government aid will increase staff and project stability and efficiency, enhance clean water and healthy soil outcomes, and leverage federal and other matching dollars to achieve conservation goals.

Thank you again to Reps. Reyer, Youakim, and Marquart for leading on this issue that has received bipartisan support and including it in the House Tax Omnibus bill, as well as to Governor Walz for including this in his supplemental budget recommendations. Your leadership on this issue will make a huge difference in achieving state conservation goals.

Thank you for including SWCD aid in HF 3669.

FRESHWATER



The Nature Conservancy 