



*An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth*

Dear Representative Acomb,

Thank you for attending the Minnesota Youth Council Committee (MYCC) hearing on March 26th, 2021, on House File 1427: The Solar on Schools Act. We appreciate your focus on students, curriculum, and communities throughout the creation of this legislation. When considering these important stakeholders, it is integral to include youth voices and we commend you for giving young people a voice in this decision-making process. The bill passed unanimously through the Minnesota Youth Council Committee, with 25 votes in favor. We value your time spent with us on this bill, and hope to partner with you on future legislative endeavors.

The MYCC welcomes many parts of the bill and, overall, feel that it's intentions will benefit students across the state. One section of the bill that we particularly regard is the centering of equitable distribution. We approve of the new amendments which require that 50% of grant recipients are districts in which 50% or more of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. We also appreciate the ways this bill helps balance school budgets. Additionally, we are in support of the educational opportunities this legislation provides, requiring that the solar energy systems be used as a "visual learning tool" and as a curriculum tool. This not only requires students to be taught about solar energy but also allows districts and schools to choose how they can best implement these devices. The Solar in Schools Act would allow for municipal buildings to be sources of renewable energy for the communities that exist within, support schools financially and fill disparity gaps, and provide opportunities for students to learn and explore the future of sustainability within their immediate district. We understand the importance of not only having solar panels but also education students on their uses, the climate crisis, and job opportunities in renewable energy.

While we are in support of this legislation we have a few reservations. Firstly, we are concerned about the lack of funding appropriated, however, we understand that due to state budgets this allocation is all that is available. To help combat this we would enjoy seeing the addition of a report that would be produced by the commissioner of the program, this report could serve as the basis for future allocations of funding. We also would like to see more emphasis placed upon equitable distribution, specifically in the use of MPCA Environmental Justice Designated Areas being a set consideration in this legislation. Alongside this, clarification that in spite of the provisions surrounding Xcel vs. Non-Xcel districts equitable distribution throughout the state is still possible.

Thank you again for your time and work in presenting this legislation to the Youth Council Committee. We continue to appreciate your work advocating for students and the environment, and hope to continue supporting HF 1427 throughout this and future sessions.

Sincerely,  
The Minnesota Youth Council Committee