



February 13, 2023

Mr. Tom Melton  
Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Ave. W.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Ref: Senate File 1173

Dear Mr. Melton:

On behalf of the Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX), I would like to express our support for Senate File 1173. This funding is critical for all energy transition communities as we plan for a future challenged to replace tax base, jobs, and facing many other significant issues. Supporting host communities is an essential part of the state's energy transition and this program will help support redevelopment efforts.

Private sector led and with a mission to grow the economy through education, research, and outreach, APEX works to create business opportunities throughout a seven-county region of northeast Minnesota. Based in Duluth, APEX works closely with stakeholders in Itasca, Lake, Cook, and St. Louis counties which includes the communities of Cohasset, Hoyt Lakes, and Taconite Harbor that are or were home to coal-fired power plants. We are an entire region in transition and understand the hurdles firsthand. It is impossible not to feel the fear just beneath the surface in conversations with workers at plants, community leaders, and fellow Minnesotans. Minnesota Power's coal-fired power plants have been an important part of northeast Minnesota's economy for decades. They are not only an important source of tax revenue and provide valuable employment but have provided energy we rely on in our daily lives. We need to work together, both rural and metro leaders, to help communities through this transition; it's a statewide effort.

Together with the support of Senate Bill 1173, we can build plans, ensure sites are shovel ready, and work together on a strategic plan that engages all those in our region. It is innovative and will ensure our communities have tools they need to forge ahead.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We are excited to see Senate Bill 1173 move forward and provide continued support for our energy transition communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Johnson  
APEX President & CEO