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House Climate and Energy Finance Committee
House File 9

Good morning, Chair Swedzinski, and members of the committee, my name is Deb Birgen, with Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) and I am submitting this written testimony in support of HF 9. While HF 9 relates to several different energy policy areas, today my focus is on Section 1, which removes the hydropower cap of 100 MW for new hydropower under the definition of eligible energy technology.

First, I would like to note that 59 of 61 MRES members receive an allocation of hydropower from the six federal dams of the Missouri River. When you think about it, it is the ultimate in renewable energy. The same water beginning from western Montana flows through each of the 6 dams, generating at each one. The aggregate capacity of the dams is just over 2400 MW of power. Hydropower is not only clean and renewable; it is flexible. Unlike intermittent forms of generation, hydropower has flexibility to allow for load following.

According to the National Hydropower Association, there are over 86,300 MW of hydropower in development. Included in this are 67 new proposed pumped storage hydropower projects across 21 states. These represent approximately 50 GW of new storage capacity. Also, U.S. Dept. of Energy studies show that existing non-powered dams in the U.S. have the potential to generate 12,000 MW of power. In fact, in 2024, the Dept. of Energy awarded $76 million for four hydropower projects. Additionally, in this region, Manitoba Hydro most recently expanded capacity with the 695 MW Keeyask Generating Station completed in 2022.

While MRES may not get power directly from some of these new facilities, the possibility should at least remain open. Development of new hydropower could assist in meeting the reliability and resiliency requirements of the Regional Transmission Organizations, the National Energy Regulatory Corporation (NERC), and the reliability expectations of customers, while still providing a renewable energy resource.

In 2023, the original version of the Carbon Free Standard and revised Renewable Energy Standard did not allow for any new hydropower to be considered an eligible energy technology. It was later amended during the 2023 session to allow new hydropower of 100 MW or less. However, as more hydropower and pumped storage hydropower may become available, it is important to make use of this generation to provide reliability on the grid, reduce emissions, and to meet clean and renewable goals and mandates.

Therefore, MRES supports the passage of HF 9, particularly section 1 of the bill.