



April 1, 2025

Chairs Hansen and Anderson and Members of the Committee:

MCEA is a public interest law firm and nonprofit advocacy organization that has defended Minnesota's environment and the health of its people for the past 50 years. Along with ten other local, regional, and national organizations, MCEA petitioned the EPA in 2023 and asked for their help to initiate a coordinated and accelerated response to address widespread nitrate contamination of groundwater in Southeast Minnesota. We write to indicate our support for HF 2916.

MCEA supports HF 2916 as part of an integrated voluntary and regulatory response we need to address nitrate-contaminated groundwater in this vulnerable part of the state.

While millions of dollars have already been invested in voluntary programs to address this problem, HF 2916 differs in one critical way: it is an outcome-based program with a tiered incentive structure that rewards producers who not only seed alternative crops, small grains and/or cover crops into their traditional crop rotations, but also successfully establish and grow them. Without the verified establishment of these best management practices, you can't guarantee that the intended nitrogen reduction and groundwater protection is provided: this is why MCEA supports the outcome-based model outlined in HF 2916, with a proven success record through the Olmsted County groundwater protection and soil health initiative. With buy-in from local soil and water conservation districts and program staff, the Olmsted initiative that this bill is modeled on provides critical technical assistance from trusted messengers, and because of that its applicant list has continued to grow.

With over 9,200 residents at risk of contaminated well water above the federal human health limit for nitrate, we need to invest in both immediate public health measures that provide relief to families at their tap and long-term source reduction: HF 2916 falls into the category of effective long-term source reduction and should be part of an integrated voluntary and regulatory response in Southeast Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. MCEA would be happy to meet with you if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Carly Griffith
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Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy