

Testimony before Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Chair, US House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior-Environment

By Greta Gauthier, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Bell Museum, 2088 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul, MN

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Good Morning Madame Chair,

My name is Greta Gauthier, I am Assistant Commissioner for Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and to provide input to the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is the delegated authority in Minnesota to carry out federal environmental law in our state. We implement these federal laws and regulations under EPA program delegation agreements, federal funding appropriations and through workplan agreements. We also implement and enforce state law. Our mission is to protect and improve the environment and public health.

Federal funding represents about nine (9) percent of the agency's biennial budget of about \$500 million or about \$23 million per year.

Federal funding is critical to our ability to carry out the requirements of our delegated authorities. The Trump Administration's proposed budget for the US EPA

in Federal Fiscal Year 2021 reduces the MPCA's federal funds by 56 percent – and eliminates fully half of the 150 FTEs funded with federal money. This level of reduction would impede work done under our federal delegated authorities to protect Minnesota's land, air and water.

I'd like to highlight a few areas where the proposed budget reductions would be especially problematic:

The first is the Clean Water Act Section 319 grants – which would be zeroed out under in Minnesota under the president's proposed budget. This reduction would compromise our ability to continue and complete the Total Maximum Daily Load assessments, as required by the Clean Water Act. Without TMDL assessments, communities across the state would be hampered in their critical work to improve water quality. Losing the ability to produce TMDL assessments in a timely fashion would slow down clean water work statewide.

Madame Chair, Minnesota is fortunate that about 60% of our surface waters are not impaired – but we also clearly have work to do to restore the 40% that are impaired.

The zero-ing out of Section 319 dollars for Minnesota would eliminate the four (4) million dollars per year in grants to communities statewide. These 319 grants support water quality work that is based on local needs and local prioritization.

Another example of the negative impact of the proposed budget is the 33% reduction in federal funding for air monitoring of particulate matter. These funds support air pollution monitoring efforts in metropolitan areas of the state. This data informs our pollution control work and our work to address environmental injustice.

In two major air pollution enforcements in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area over the past year, the affected communities have made it very clear that they want more information and more data on air quality – not less.

Yet another example is in the Brownfields Response Program, where we would see a 31% reduction under the president's proposed budget. The Brownfields program is about cleaning up polluted lands and restoring developable property – and thus tax base -- to communities across Minnesota. Reducing these funds would prevent approximately 1 million to 2 million Minnesotans from receiving the economic and public health benefits of the Brownfields program.

Finally, the proposed reduction of about 33 % in our Performance Partnership sub grants will impede much of our work to prevent pollution and manage contamination – and our ability to provide technical assistance to local government among other things.

Madame Chair, I would be remiss if I did not mention the need for additional resources towards the problem of PFAS, or Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl substances. Minnesota has been on the forefront of addressing PFAs through our work in fourteen (14) East Metro communities with PFAS-contaminated drinking water. Looking ahead, the MPCA is working to gather more information about the presence and sources of PFAS in our state, and working with our sister state agencies to determine how best to tackle PFAS in Minnesota.

Addressing PFAS will require the combined efforts of the federal, state and local governments in the years to come. This work has been supported by the Multipurpose Grants category, which unfortunately is proposed to be cut by 23% in

the president's budget proposal. We encourage additional funding to address the many challenges presented by PFAS contamination.

Madame Chair, this concludes my remarks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.