

Dear Minnesota Legislative Energy Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony for the November 13th hearing on "The Future of Fossil Fuel Generation in Minnesota."

The best science tells us that in order to avert the worst impacts of the climate crisis, we must achieve net zero emissions by 2050 globally. In order to do that, we need states like Minnesota to lead on climate action and clean energy. We cannot afford to focus on a future for fossil fuels when Minnesota has no pathway to achieving zero emissions from our energy sector.

Minnesotans need ambitious solutions that cut emissions, create good jobs, protect people's health, and address racial and economic inequalities. This means we must transition our electricity sector to 100 percent clean energy at an accelerated pace, retiring all remaining coal plants by 2030 at the very latest and investing in renewable energy, transmission, and energy storage instead of new fossil fuel plants and infrastructure.

This commission should focus on achieving a clean energy future for Minnesotans that is affordable, reliable, renewable, supports job opportunities for communities, and supports an equitable and just transition for fossil fuel communities and workers. The focus of this hearing should be on clean energy, not the future of fossil fuels. There is no future for fossil fuels if we are serious about addressing the climate crisis and protecting public health.

The extraction, transportation, and burning of fossil gas poses significant health and safety risks to communities and fuels the climate crisis. Shifting toward clean sources of energy can save money for ratepayers and prevent these risks, particularly for those most impacted by fossil gas pollution, climate and cost impacts, primarily communities of color and low-income communities.

With coal plants retiring, Minnesota has a unique opportunity to replace coal with renewable energy. Instead, we are on the precipice of overbuilding natural gas, which will leave us stuck with stranded assets and energy infrastructure that is bad for our health, our climate, and our economy. A 2015 Union of Concerned Scientists report, "The Natural Gas Gamble," found that the US electric sector was at risk of creating overreliance on gas-fired power, exposing customers to increased emissions as well as price spikes, and even potentially forcing some customers to pay for underused, idled, or even abandoned plants and pipelines: <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2015/03/natural-gas-gamble-full-report.pdf>.

Despite these risks, Minnesota utilities have proposed new fossil gas plants instead of planning for a 100 percent clean and equitable energy future. Minnesota Power has proposed to build the 525-625 MW Nemadji Trail Energy Center in Superior (shared with Dairyland Power in WI); and Xcel Energy has proposed to build an 800 MW Sherco fracked gas plant and gas pipeline in Becker, MN. When it comes to gas, the utility industry is repeating the same mistakes it made with coal: ignoring environmental costs, market trends, and lack of public support.

Minnesota must commit to 100 percent clean energy and strengthen its existing climate commitments while also working to support a just transition for workers and communities who will be impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels and frontline communities who have been most impacted by pollution. Investing in a just transition to clean, renewable energy instead of fossil fuels like fossil gas is an

opportunity to address the climate crisis and the racial and economic inequities in our state. Focus on a future for clean energy, not fossil fuels.

Additional resources on natural gas:

<https://blog.ucsusa.org/joseph-daniel/rush-to-overbuild-gas-fired-power>

<https://blog.ucsusa.org/mark-specht/natural-gas-power-plants-are-not-clean>

Sincerely,

Sister Gladys Schmitz

170 Good Counsel Dr

Mankato, MN 56001-3138

Retired [gschmitz@ssndcp.org](mailto:gschmitz@ssndcp.org)