117 South First Street • Montevideo, MN 56265

March 6, 2025

Chair Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
Re: S.F. 1690

Chair Hawj and Committee Members,

CURE is a rurally based, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring resilient towns and landscapes by harnessing the power of the people who care about them. We are proud to join the coalition of organizations and community members from across the state who believe that this bill is an important step towards addressing the crisis of waste in Minnesota which causes unnecessary environmental and economic harms for both rural and urban communities.

E-waste is the fastest growing portion of the municipal waste stream as consumers dispose of more phones, televisions, computers, and electronic devices every year. And while e-waste represents a limited portion of the overall waste stream, it contains a disproportionate number of heavy metals like lead and other toxic materials. When inappropriately disposed of in landfills or incinerators—which are largely sited in rural and suburban locations—it poses a severe risk to the water and air quality of surrounding communities.

The increase in e-waste is also leading to an increase in materials sorting facility, landfill, and hauling truck fires caused by the lithium batteries found in an ever-growing number of electronic products, posing a risk to operators, workers, and nearby residents. The waste industry should not have to pay for frequent and sometimes catastrophic fires caused by a small number of cheap electronics with embedded batteries. Improperly disposed of lithium batteries also add to the growing threat of wildfire in Minnesota's forests and grasslands. A "disposable" e-cigarette powered by a lithium-ion battery casually discarded on a grassy roadside and potentially crushed by an unsuspecting public employee on a riding mower becomes a lethal risk, especially in dry conditions.

E-waste also poses unique logistical and financial challenges to rural communities and counties. E-waste disposal sites are few and far between outside of Minnesota's dense population centers, and those that exist only accept a limited type of electronics and often charge fees that are a regressive burden on those who can least afford it. Widespread collection requires staff, facilities, and funding that can be a challenge for under-resourced counties and municipalities. But ignoring the problem will not make it go away, and resources must be allocated to help rural communities build this capacity. This legislation will not create additional state government expense but rather will provide counties and other entities with

the necessary resources to reliably collect and transport e-waste so that it can be responsibly recycled, reused, and disposed of.

More comprehensive and efficient collection of electronic waste also offers myriad opportunities for Minnesota including the ability to access high-value minerals such as gold, copper, silver, and platinum group metals that could be recycled and reused instead of ending up in landfills and incinerators. In fact, it's estimated that in Minnesota alone $3.2 billion worth of high-value metals and minerals contained in e-waste is dumped or burned instead of captured and recycled each year. Electronics recycling has the potential to create needed jobs in deindustrialized rural communities that bring economic benefits while helping reduce air, land, and water pollution.

We need to update Minnesota's e-waste recycling law and programs to address the current harms and harness the opportunities. S.F. 1690 will achieve this by increasing access and funding state-wide to e-waste recycling sites and resources and reducing the barriers to wide-scale e-waste recycling for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Mooradian
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