

The Honorable Rick Hansen  
Chair, Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee  
407 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Fong Hawj  
Chair, Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3231  
St. Paul, MN 55155

January 23, 2023

Dear Chair Hansen and Chair Hawj:

On behalf of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), representing over 75,000 residents of the Iron Range, we are writing to urge you to amend Article 2 of House File 172 and Senate File 442 which creates new criteria for entities applying for Legislative-Citizens Commission on Natural Resources grant dollars for capital projects. Of particular concern is the language requiring recipients of LCCMR grants for capital projects to provide a cash or in-kind match from non-trust fund sources of at least 50 percent of the total eligible project costs.

Capital projects in Greater Minnesota have benefitted in recent years from LCCMR grants. Communities have been able to construct campgrounds, visitor centers, trails, and trailheads to serve visitors from across the state of Minnesota. This new match requirement and additional layers of bureaucracy will negatively impact the ability of small cities and other organizations from seeking LCCMR funding. In northeastern Minnesota, worthy projects in Crane Lake, Silver Bay, Ranier, Virginia, Chisholm, Biwabik, Brookston, and others would not have been able to move forward if the new match requirements were in place. These projects have or are being built to serve visitors to northern Minnesota and the new, restrictive LCCMR requirements will prevent other communities from seeking LCCMR funds.

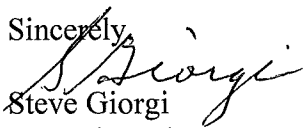
Further, why is the Legislature singling out capital projects? Why would other non-capital project LCCMR grant recipients not have to provide a match? These new restrictions on LCCMR grant dollars appear to be an effort to prevent communities in Greater Minnesota from successfully seeking out an LCCMR grant award. Even the Capital Investment Committees have passed blanket waivers on the 50% match requirement for capital bonding projects and routinely exempt projects from this requirement.

We would urge the Legislature to scrap the additional capital requirements in Section 3 of House File 172 and Senate File 442. At a minimum, we would urge the Legislature to fairly apply the match requirement to all LCCMR awards going forward, or to consider a reduced match requirement of 10%.

*“One Range... One Voice”*

Please help communities and organizations across Minnesota by making LCCMR more accessible and reject the more restrictive language in House File 172 and Senate File 442.

Sincerely,

  
Steve Giorgi

Executive Director

RAMS

CC: House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee Members  
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee Members  
Melissa Hortman, Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives  
Lisa Demuth, House Minority Leader  
Kari Dziedzic, Senate Majority Leader  
Mark Johnson, Senate Minority Leader  
Becca Nash, Director, Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources  
Tim Walz, Governor of the State of Minnesota  
Ida Rukavina, Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources  
LCCMR Commission Members