



March 26, 2026

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board

520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Board Members,

On behalf of our more than 3,100 family physician and medical student members, the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians (MAFP) urges your support for integrating a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) into any project for which an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared.

The MAFP is the largest physician specialty society in Minnesota, and our members take care of patients, families and communities across the state. We are leaders in primary care, and we work to keep our patients healthy, address health disparities and manage our patients' chronic conditions.

We urge state agencies to require a comprehensive, independent Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for any project requiring an environmental impact statement (EIS) and to revise Minnesota's environmental assessment worksheet and other screening documents to explicitly address human health impacts. HIAs should be funded as a required component of environmental review, incorporate qualitative information and traditional ecological knowledge and include resources for the Minnesota Department of Health to provide technical and financial support to Tribal Nations and local communities.

Since 2014, health professionals have raised concerns that environmental review alone does not adequately evaluate risks to human health, particularly for projects involving sulfide ore mining. Medical and public health experts have documented serious harms associated with mining-related pollution, including methylmercury contamination of fish; exposure to heavy metals such as lead, manganese and arsenic; and air emissions linked to cancer and neurologic damage.

EIS alone may also fail to assess the combined and cumulative health risks of multiple pollutants, including neurologic impairment from manganese and lead in water and carcinogenic air emissions of crystalline fibers, nickel and other particulates, as well as arsenic contamination. HIAs provide a necessary framework to evaluate these risks and to consider impacts to workers, nearby residents and downstream communities, including those who rely on fishing, hunting or gathering for cultural or subsistence purposes.

We respectfully request that HIAs be integrated into environmental review screening and required for all projects subject to an environmental impact statement or alternative environmental review to better protect the health and well-being of Minnesota communities.

We look forward to engaging with you and your colleagues and are grateful for our shared commitment to the health of all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JC' followed by a stylized flourish.

Jamie Conniff, MD, MPH
MAFP President