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May 9, 2023

Chairman Pete Stauber Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Ranking Member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Congressman Stauber and Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez:

The Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) is an advocacy organization formed in 1939 that has been representing the best interests of communities and public schools that reside within the boundaries of an area known as the Taconite Assistance Area of northeastern Minnesota. This area includes the Rainy River Watershed as well as all active Taconite mines in Minnesota that produce over 80 percent of the domestic iron ore in our nation. The Iron Range has been mining for 139 years without any significant environmental disasters and we believe that we are the best environmental stewards of our own "back yard".

Congressman Stauber's proposed legislation titled *Superior National Forest Restoration Act* is a bold action that will rightfully restore our region by removing a 20-year ban on mineral exploration while also releasing over 225,000 acres for access once again. Reinstatement of federal leases that were wrongfully removed is another important provision of the legislation. Most important is the prohibition of judicial review of those leases, as frivolous, time consuming and expensive litigation has been the primary means of anti-development crusaders for the past two decades as they insist that precious mineral extraction will obliviate the entire region.

The RAMS Board of Directors consists of twenty-two publicly elected officials from township supervisors, city councils and school board directors. These public officials understand the importance of our mining industry, our timber industry as well as our tourist industry. From our perspective, they all do better when they all are working at full capacity. The opportunity in northeastern Minnesota to capitalize on the rich precious mineral deposits found in the Duluth Complex is one that we must pursue if we are to meet our carbon free goals in 2040 as established by our Minnesota legislature. All the precious metals needed for the green economy, the EV auto revolution, the solar and wind energy transition, are in the Duluth Complex. As local community leaders we would never support an industry that cannot meet or exceed all established environmental standards, because THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE, WORK, and PLAY. We are not going to ignore any industry that does not meet OUR STANDARDS for safe working conditions, livable working wages and maintaining a clean environment.

RAMS speaking on behalf of the 78,000 residents of our region, strongly supports the efforts of Congressman Stauber with his proposed legislation as well as the utilization of House Concurrent Resolution 34 that will allow for the nullification of Public Land Order #7917. As evident in the hearings when Secretary Haaland testified to not knowing that there were "critical minerals" located in the

withdrawal area, this needs to be overturned so that a complete review of the Mine Plan of Operation submitted by Twin Metals is examined and vetted via the NEPA process as prescribed by law.

RAMS has a motto; "ONE RANGE - ONE VOICE" and we are speaking loudly and proudly in our support for the Superior National Forest Restoration Act as proposed by Congressman Stauber and we ask all elected officials to hear our voice, hear our message and vote in support of following the right of due process in this matter.

On behalf of the RAMS Board of Directors,

Steve Giorgi **Executive Director** Range Association of Municipalities & Schools sgiorgi@ramsmn.org 218,780,8877

Range Association of Municipalities & Schools (RAMS): RAMS as an organization represents more than 78,000 residents and 63 public sector units of government including, 29 cities, 15 public school districts, and 19 townships in the 13,000 square mile area known as the Taconite Assistance Area of Northeastern Minnesota. RAMS has advocated for our region since 1939 and is proud to proclaim "ONE RANGE -ONE VOICE" on issues of regional importance on behalf of our member units.

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