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April 17, 2019

Joint Committee on Finance
Attn: Joe Malkasian
Room 305 East
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

We are writing to share Xcel Energy's strong support for the proposed UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences building project that is up for enumeration in the 2019-21 Wisconsin state budget and advance enumeration for the second half of funding in the 2021-23 budget.

As a major U.S. utility operating in eight states, we serve more than 250,000 electricity and 100,000 natural gas customers in Wisconsin through a leading portfolio of increasing clean energy resources while ensuring safety, reliability and value for our customers.

Our company's Wisconsin headquarters has been in Eau Claire for more than 100 years. We're a vital part of the Wisconsin economy, powering homes and businesses, providing good jobs and partnering with our communities. Eau Claire is a place where the quality of life is high and the region's public, private and institutional leaders work together to ensure that Wisconsin thrives.

As Wisconsin's #1 provider of renewable energy, Xcel Energy has a strong relationship with UW-Eau Claire through their participation in our solar and wind power programs. Our partnership goes beyond helping the campus meet its sustainability goals and we have a long, established relationship to ensure they offer the right kind of curriculum, research opportunities and training to prepare our future workforce. Since 1961, our Xcel Energy Foundation has been funding student scholarships, key outreach programs and high-impact practices that transform student learning.

We also work closely with UW-Eau Claire to provide internships in a variety of fields so when job openings become available the company has a pool of qualified candidates.

Currently, more than 120 UW-Eau Claire alumni work at Xcel Energy, and we're always looking for talented employees.

As with many local and regional employers, we see first-hand the important role that UW-Eau Claire plays in our local economy and value the excellence of the students that graduate from the university.

In our view, funding the proposed UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences building will create numerous opportunities for both students and businesses who rely on the university for STEM-related employees, training and R&D. This is an important investment in Wisconsin and vital to recruit and retain talented individuals in our state.

In the past five years, more than 225 businesses and external organizations collaborated with UW-Eau Claire's STEM and Health Sciences programs. Many of these businesses are customers of Xcel Energy and we understand the important role that UW-Eau Claire provides in conducting and facilitating the necessary and cost-effective training and research needed to be successful in today's highly competitive marketplace.

We are excited about the opportunities that a new UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences building would have on the region and encourage your support to include the project in the upcoming state budget.