

**BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION**

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**In the Matter of** :  
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**CRYSTALLINE SILICON PHOTOVOLTAIC** :  
**CELLS (WHETHER OR NOT PARTIALLY** :  
**OR FULLY ASSEMBLED INTO OTHER** :  
**PRODUCTS)** :  
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**STATEMENT OF  
STATE SENATOR DAVID J. TOMASSONI  
SIXTH DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to appear today to discuss the Commission's safeguards investigation. Since 1993, I have been a member of the Minnesota Legislature, 8 years in the House of Representatives and the State Senator for the last 17 years representing the state's Sixth District, which is home to about 80,000 Minnesotans. I am here today to urge the Commission to exempt imports from Canada from the safeguards measures that are contemplated in today's hearing.

As my colleagues and I noted last week in a bipartisan letter filed with the Commission, Minnesotans benefit enormously from solar trade with Canada. Investment stemming from the Canadian solar trade has brought much-needed jobs and opportunities to our region, and it promises to be a continued source of growth in the years ahead.

The residents of my district, in particular, would suffer if the United States were to apply safeguards measures against Canadian cells or modules. Minnesota's Sixth District, in the northern part of the state, includes most of the Iron Range, a region that is struggling to recover from a stubborn economic downturn. The Iron Range is a resource-based economy relying on iron ore mining and logging and is a rural manufacturing area that has an urgent need for new

investment and diversification. Not only has manufacturing migrated away from the region in recent years, but the region's historically robust mining industry has been undercut by cheap imports of metals from abroad. I always say, "When the steel industry has a hick-up the Iron Range gets the flu." These combined forces have led to massive layoffs and persistent unemployment. This boom and bust phenomenon is why I have worked hard alongside my colleagues in the state government, in a bi-partisan manner, to protect the U.S. workers that call this region home, but truly reinvigorating and stabilizing the economy of the Iron Range will require new investments and means of economic diversification.

The solar trade with Canada has opened doors for such opportunities in this part of the state. The Sixth District is home, for instance, to the Mountain Iron solar manufacturing plant that my colleagues and I described in our bipartisan letter last week. Solar panel manufacturer Silicon Energy opened the plant in 2011, bringing manufacturing jobs and opportunities for growth to the region. When Silicon Energy eventually encountered quality-related problems, Ontario-based Heliene came to the rescue, starting contract work at the plant in 2015. Earlier this year, Heliene assumed a lease to operate the entire Mountain Iron plant. Not only did Heliene save the manufacturing jobs that otherwise would have been lost, but the plant now generates roughly double the number of solar panels as Silicon Energy. Under Heliene, purchasers in the United States have also noted that the high quality of our Minnesota panels sets them apart from those of competitors. Given the promise of this venture, the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development are working with Heliene on a plan to invest nearly \$10 million on new manufacturing equipment, plant expansion, and supplies to expand production even further this fall. This project will immediately create 25 new jobs, eventually

employing approximately 70 Minnesotans in quality, high-technology jobs and producing over 100 megawatts of solar panels.

My district is excited by opportunities like this that are made possible by the important relationship with our Canadian neighbors, but the proposed safeguards measures would threaten the viability of such investments. Indeed, if prohibitive safeguard duties or quotas are imposed on solar products from Canada, operations like Heliene's Mountain Iron facility will no longer have access to vital components and Minnesotans will suffer the consequences. We are grateful for the Commission's work to protect U.S. manufacturers, and we would encourage the Commission to consider that imposing restrictive measures against our Canadian partners would inevitably harm workers and producers in the United States as well.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Commission may have.