



Robins Consulting

James Robins + jamesnrobins@yahoo.com + 612.597.0214
375 Stryker Ave. + Saint Paul, MN 55107

James Robins - submitted testimony

House State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee HF 1830 – as proposed to be amended on March 30, 2023

Chair Klevorn, Republican Lead Nash and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on providing proscribed salary setting authority via an independent Compensation Council as proposed in amended HF 1830 / standalone HF 3023, and the modified MMB-proposed version contained in HF 2940 passed earlier by the committee. For context, I served on the Compensation Council in 2017 and 2019, and declined an opportunity to continue serving in 2021 based primarily on the consistent lack of legislative consideration for the Council's recommendations.

I support the overall thrust of an independent Compensation Council, the pending salary recommendations of the 2023 panel, and the repeal of state agency pay tier designations in 15A.085 as the committee had approved in its earlier adoption of HF 2940, first engrossment. The repeal of state agency pay tiers was strongly supported in the Council's 2019 recommendations to the Legislature. Speaking only for myself, I have three major concerns with the plan in HF 1830 as proposed to be amended:

- Deliberations of the Council should be lengthened well beyond a three-month period – February-April, allowing for extensive meetings in the even-numbered years with action to be taken effective in the following biennium. The resulting public participation in this important process should be encouraged.
- Lobbyists should be prohibited from Council appointment in a similar way to the limitation in effect for the Legislative Salary Council. As a state-registered lobbyist involved with state agency deliberations, it would be a conflict of interest for me to participate in proscribing salaries for the heads of agencies or state officers – in contrast to merely making recommendations as I had done under current state law.

- The appointment structure should be modified to include appointments input from the Legislative branch which is responsible for adopting the overall state budget while continuing to ensure a 50/50 political balance so no single party is allowed to dominate. This could be accomplished by adding four additional members to the Council, one each from the House majority and minority, and Senate majority and minority.

As the proposed Compensation Council restructuring stands, it appears to me that an overall good idea has been moved forward hampered considerably by the lack of due consideration or benefit of adequate public input. In my view, moving forward with the Council's pay recommendations and repeal of the agency pay tier structure is justified, but further discussion of how to constitute an independent Compensation Council would be warranted during the legislative interim. Extending the current Compensation Council's service term to Dec. 15, 2023 to make a fully considered recommendation would accomplish that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Rep. Klevorn, Rep. Nash, Rep. Liz Olson, Sen. Marty, Sen. Murphy, Commissioner Showalter, Tom Berg