

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MATT EHLING
MINNESOTA COALITION ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION
HF 804

House Civil Law Committee, March 12, 2019

The Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI) offers its endorsement of HF 804, which would extend the term of the Legislative Commission on Data Practices and Personal Privacy.

In 2014, MNCOGI supported efforts by Senator Dibble and then-Representative Mary Liz Holberg to bring the commission into being. Those authors had hoped to provide a space within the legislative process to discuss and evaluate what are often complex matters of public policy - specifically, Minnesota's unique statutory approach to the management of government data, as well as the impact of technological developments on personal privacy.

As evidenced by her 2014 testimony, Representative Holberg felt that having a venue where emerging Data Practices and issues (as well as technology and policy issues impacting personal privacy) could be vetted and discussed was valuable - particularly one that existed outside of the regular pass-or-fail bill process that takes up most legislative committee time.

In the years since its creation, we have seen the commission research and evaluate many emerging issues - including license plate reader (LRP) technology, police body cameras, and most recently, data breaches. The commission has also reviewed net neutrality, medical record privacy, the transparency of public health care program spending, and a variety of other matters. Some of these issues have come back to the legislature in bill form, and have formed the basis for laws now on the books. For example, the legislature's initial discussions about the regulation of LRP technology started in a public commission hearing. Concepts that emerged during that hearing eventually made their way into the final LRP regulations, now codified at Minn. Stat. 13.824. The LRP law contains provisions that address data classification - as well as technological regulation - and it illustrates how these policy areas overlap and inter-relate.

As the rapid march of technological development continues, the data and technology issues facing the Minnesota Legislature will only become complicated, and more challenging. MNCOGI believes that the commission will continue to provide a valuable role in addressing these issues, as it has in the recent past.

MNCOIG thanks Chair Lesch for bringing this bill forward.