



April 23, 2020

Re: HF3499DE2-1

Chair Nelson and Members of the House State Government Finance Division,

On behalf of our membership of over 800 cities across the state of Minnesota, I want to thank you for your ongoing work on an elections bill that will address several issues raised by local elections officials.

For weeks now, elections administrators have voiced concerns about the safety and health of Minnesota voters and those who staff polling places given the COVID-19 outbreak. Secretary Simon recently convened elections administrators across the state to discuss possible tools and resources needed to conduct elections during a global pandemic. The delete-all amendment you are considering today reflects those conversations and will provide some valuable tools and resources to conduct the 2020 state primary and the November general election.

Elections administrators are wholly dedicated to ensuring that those who are eligible to vote can do so safely and securely. The Department of Homeland Security has declared elections a critical infrastructure and as such, the Office of the Secretary of State and local elections officials must have the authority to conduct elections in the safest and most secure manner under our current conditions. It is deeply disappointing that allowing the expansion of mail balloting to all eligible Minnesota voters was not included in this negotiated language. Many Minnesotans currently live in jurisdictions that conduct elections by mail balloting only. This option should be expanded to all Minnesotans regardless of what area of the state they live in, particularly given the distancing guidelines we are all expected to follow to protect our most vulnerable populations. Vote centers and ballot drop boxes should also be made available to assist voters in a safe way. While absentee balloting provides voters with the ability to vote from their homes, our current system requires that voters apply to receive an absentee ballot. This will require extensive education to voters to more fully understand the process as well as increased administration for cities and counties.

Thank you again for all that you are doing to ensure that Minnesotans feel confident in their ability to vote safely. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at alindstrom@lmc.org or 612-327-6898.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Lindstrom".

Ann Lindstrom
Intergovernmental Relations Representative