

April 8, 2020

Amanda M. Rudolph, J.D.
Committee Administrator
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Ms. Rudolph,

Thank you for the work your committee is doing to consider the proposed voting contingency plans related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are in an unprecedented situation in the United States with this pandemic. Extraordinary measures have been taken by our federal and state governments, businesses, and individuals to minimize the spread of this virus and cope with the economic consequences. Protecting Minnesota voters and our elections will also require extraordinary measures. Please carefully consider the following:

- Minnesota has an existing vote-by-mail process for communities of 400 or less that is well understood. A temporary expansion of this process to larger communities is reasonable under these extreme circumstances.
- Using guidance from health experts, many polling sites could be modified to accommodate necessary social distancing and infection control. Funds need to be allocated to support all of the infection mitigation measures recommended by experts, including increased ventilation and hand-sanitizer stations. Funds need to be allocated for a public information effort to assure voters that polling sites are safe.
- Some of the changes to polling places needed to reduce virus infection risk will unavoidably make it harder for some categories of voters to vote. It's extremely important that the legislature and Secretary of State's Office identify and implement ways to mitigate these hardships. For example, the state could rent vans and equip them to be mobile polling sites designed to facilitate infection control. Creative problem solving is needed.

Thank you again.

Stuart Chastain
Shoreview, MN