



Association of Minnesota Counties

April 22, 2020

Representative Michael Nelson
Chair, State Government Finance Committee
585 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: County Support of the Underlying DE2-1 Amendment to HF 3499

Dear Chair Nelson and House State Government Finance Committee Members:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties, an organization representing all of Minnesota's 87 counties, I am writing in support of the underlying DE2-1 amendment to HF 3499.

The effects of COVID-19 have been far-reaching and severe. Counties—alongside the state and local government partners—have stepped up to the challenges of the coronavirus to continue providing essential services to residents in creative and safe ways. In this sense, county commissioners have been very supportive and grateful for legislative actions that provide necessary flexibility to address unique needs during this unprecedented time. The operations of elections are no different.

Without reasonable and practical changes to election law, Minnesotans may be put in an uncomfortable position of choosing between their own personal health and their fundamental right to vote, should the coronavirus health impacts continue through the election season. We appreciate the bipartisan work and discussions that this committee has facilitated surrounding additional mechanisms to provide needed flexibility to county and municipal election administrators, including the expansion of absentee balloting processing from 7 to 14 days as well as the delayed date in determining poll locations. While these changes are very welcome, local government election administrators will likely need additional support from the Legislature and Secretary of State's office to do our best to address concerns related to depleted election judge participation and adequate staffing.

We hope that there will be continued conversations to address these needs and other unforeseen issues that may continue to arise over time. As always, counties remain committed to working with the Legislature to find solutions.

Sincerely,



Matt Hilgart, Government Relations Manager
Association of Minnesota Counties