



May 3, 2021

Representative Michael Nelson, Chair  
House State Government Finance Committee  
585 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Chair  
State Government Finance and Policy and Elections Committee  
3103 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Nelson and Chair Kiffmeyer:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the important role that technology and IT services plays in creating a government that works for all Minnesotans. As the conference committee on HF1952/SF1831 begins, we look forward to working with the committee to address the needs and expectations of Minnesotans for evolving digital capabilities in state services.

Technology has performed a central role in enabling the State of Minnesota's pandemic response and economic recovery efforts, and it has been possible because of the close collaboration between Minnesota IT Services (MNIT), our state agency partners, and the work with our partners in the private sector, such as members of the Blue Ribbon Council on IT (BRC-IT). The BRC-IT is now looking for MNIT to harness that spirit of rapid innovation to play a strong leadership role in technology services across state government – to drive transformation and modernization. While we recognize the challenge facing this committee in arriving at an agreement within the budget target, we strongly encourage the committee to fully fund the Governor's recommended change item for implementation of BRC-IT recommendations in the area of IT project delivery and digital services. The State's IT project portfolio includes over 300 projects, equating to roughly \$250 million in total spend in agencies across the executive branch. This portfolio represents a tremendous opportunity to modernize how the State interacts with Minnesotans; fully funding this change item will help ensure that the value of the State's investment in this portfolio is maximized to better serve all Minnesotans.

To best support the needs of state government, the committee should fund cybersecurity enhancements in addition to provisions to advance recommendations from the BRC-IT. Any overall reduction in our current funding will negatively impact MNIT's ability to perform our important IT and cybersecurity leadership roles, which has the potential to adversely affect the security of state IT systems at a time when the frequency of cyberattacks is increasing. For example, the frequency of distributed denial of service attacks rose by 20% in 2020, with a 22% increase in the last six months of the year, according to cybersecurity research firm Netscout.

Over this past year, governments and organizations across the world have been tested by an unprecedented pandemic, which has pushed previous limits with technology. Gartner, a leading technology research firm, expects global technology investment to surpass \$4.1 trillion, an increase of 8.4% from 2020. Many companies are prioritizing and increasing their investment in IT systems and digitization of services to be able to provide better value.

The State of Minnesota anticipates a similar demand as these private-sector organizations, and it will continue to see unprecedented need for technology. First, as we embrace new ways of working, government organizations must continue to leverage technology to enhance productivity and collaboration, and to promote a healthy work environment.

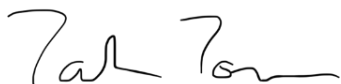
Second, there will be higher demand to meet Minnesotans needs in an increasingly digital world. We will continue seeing this shift across state government, and have already seen many examples of this, including:

- the ability for Minnesotans to renew a driver's license online for the first time in Minnesota history,
- new ways to engage with Minnesotans with critical food assistance through services such as text messaging,
- and our nation-leading efforts in the unemployment insurance space – making sure people have access to rapidly-evolving Federal benefits as quickly as possible amid unprecedented demand.

Third, investing in technology can change outcomes for people, particularly in a crisis. Technology allows us to reimagine service delivery and gain new insights that help reduce systemic biases that individuals or manual processes may hold, and it creates the ability to effectively measure our success.

Fully-funding Governor Walz's recommendations would significantly advance digital service opportunities for Minnesotans, which our agency promotes and supports alongside our state agency partners and our partners in the private sector, such as members of Blue Ribbon Council on IT. Like many public and private organizations across the world, Minnesota government has seen just how essential IT truly is. I look forward to working with the conferees to help craft an agreement that recognizes the importance of continued investment in IT and cybersecurity, and we stand ready to offer any additional information that the committee may require in the final weeks of the 2021 Legislative Session.

Sincerely,



Tarek Tomes  
Commissioner and State Chief Information Officer