



March 20, 2023

Chair & Representative Jamie Becker-Finn
House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
c/o Anna Borgerding, Committee Administrator
Room 5, Minnesota State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Testimony in Support of HF 635

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. Together, we envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate, and our elections are conducted free of threats and intimidation to voters and election officials.

LWV Minnesota supports HF 635 which prohibits intimidation of election officials and interference with the performance of election administration duties:

The concerns this bill addresses are not imaginary or hypothetical. In parts of our country outside of Minnesota there have been specific issues with election officials and election workers receiving threats on their lives or on the lives of their families. In some cases, poll workers have had to go into hiding for fear of their or their family's safety. The issue to be addressed is real, and it has served to drive dedicated election professionals from their roles. While threats and intimidation of election officials has not happened to the same degree in Minnesota as elsewhere, we have seen the same underlying beliefs and behaviors by those who have been led to believe, without any evidence that has withstood judicial scrutiny, that our elections are not secure and that outcomes cannot be trusted.

In Minnesota, we have seen well organized, well-funded groups, including paid speakers and consultants from outside of Minnesota, that have gone to County Boards arguing that our current elections and election officials cannot be trusted, and that election processes must be changed. As a Head Election Judge I have personally had voters ask to see the internet connection on the ballot scanning machine (DS200), to take pictures of the election equipment, or ask to take a picture and track their personal ballot to ensure it is counted accurately. The

questioning and challenging by some voters has made elections judges uncomfortable, necessitating leadership intervention to support the judges and defuse the situation.

I personally know of election judges that are either reluctant to work at the polls or who no longer work at the polls due to concern for harassment based on the current political climate and events that have taken place in other states. LWV Minnesota leaders and members have been to County Board meetings and seen the level of animosity and inaccurate information presented, and the determined persistence of the groups pursuing these efforts, contributing to the departure of experienced election officials.

We cannot legislate what people may believe, but we can legislate how people may behave. While there are laws regarding potential threats or harassment that might apply in these situations, they are more general and lack the specificity warranted based on the unique role of election officials in ensuring the integrity of our democracy. This bill will make it clear to those who might harass or threaten election officials, as well as to those same election officials and workers, that such threats and harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated, no matter what a person may believe about the integrity of elections and our election systems.

LWV Minnesota urges you to vote YES on HF 635.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Huffman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Huffman, Redistricting Coordinator
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

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