February 14, 2023

Representative Mike Freiberg

Chair, House Elections Finance and Policy Committee

381 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 3447 - Concerns regarding election administration resources

Dear Chair Freiberg:

The Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO) is comprised of the Minnesota County Recorders Association (MCRA) and the Minnesota Association of County Auditors, Treasurers, and Financial Officers (MACATFO) and represents county officers from all 87 Minnesota Counties, including county election administrators.

Though county election administrators support convenient poll locations, we have concerns regarding House File 3447. We are concerned with the bill’s use of prescriptive language mandating county auditors to establish a polling place rather than current permissive language authorizing county auditors to designate absentee and early voting polling places prior to election day.

Significant planning and resources are required to establish a temporary polling location with dozens of logistical details to be considered and mitigated to establish a safe, secure, functioning location. When determining if, where, or when a temporary polling location will be established, election administrators must determine how to best utilize limited resources such as election judges, equipment, supplies, etc. in the most efficient way possible. Some logistical complications are specific to postsecondary institutions, and those are not addressed in this bill. For example, how will students who attend the institution, but live in off-campus housing in the neighboring county exercise their right to vote, how will members of the public access the polling place on campus when parking is usually paid and/or permitted.

We feel that allowing election administrators a wider use of discretion and flexibility will produce the best decision possible as to whether a temporary polling location is or is not established. A temporary polling place on a postsecondary institution’s campus may be part of the plan for an efficient and effective election, however it is already authorized under current law and should not become mandated if requested by the institution.

A historic number of changes affecting the administration of Minnesota’s elections were approved by the legislature in 2023. These changes included laws affecting the assignment of temporary polling locations and providing counties with some limited additional election administration funding via the newly established VOTER Fund. With so many changes to be implemented for elections later this year, we prefer that county election administrators continue to have discretion over establishing temporary polling locations rather than be required to establish locations that may even further stretch limited staff, equipment, and logistical resources.

Thank you for this opportunity to raise our concerns regarding HF3447. We are happy to be available to the author and committee to discuss this issue further in the future.

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,