



February 24, 2021

**RE: HF 820 – Pandemic Fix to Open Meeting Law**

Dear House Local Government Division Members,

The League of Minnesota Cities, Minnesota School Boards Association, Minnesota Association of Townships, and Association of Minnesota Counties support HF 820. We are seeking this legislation to address the delicate balance of supporting the ability of local governments to conduct in-person meetings during the pandemic and health concerns of individual elected officials who may not feel safe to attend these meetings in-person.

Last session, the legislature passed a medical exception to the Open Meeting Law, allowing some remote participation of elected officials in meetings during a health pandemic or declared emergency. However, there was a cap of three times per calendar year. The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted longer than anyone would like, which necessitates this bill.

**COVID gap with current law.** Local governments can either completely meet virtually if they determine that an in-person meeting is “not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under chapter 12.” If they choose not to make this determination and safely hold in-person meetings instead, elected officials who still have medical concerns are only allowed to participate from home up to three times a year.

Given the length of the pandemic, elected officials have maxed out this cap quickly. HF 820 would allow elected officials to safely participate in meetings from their home without risking their or their family’s health during the current pandemic.

Accordingly, we ask for your support of HF 820.

Sincerely,

Irene Kao  
League of Minnesota Cities

Denise Dittrich  
Minnesota School Boards Association

Steve Fenske  
Minnesota Association of Townships

Leah Patton  
Association of Minnesota Counties  
Minnesota County IT Leadership Association