



April 3, 2024

Re: Support for HF 4598

Chair Klevorn and Members of the Committee,

TakeAction Minnesota is a grassroots, multi-racial people's organization that believes in a state that works for all of us and where nobody is left out. With our members, we advocate for policies that promote justice and fairness. Our members know that no matter our age, race, or where we live, we all benefit from a strong democracy. We are writing to share our strong support for HF 4598 (Long).

Banning gerrymandering while establishing and empowering an independent redistricting commission will strengthen our democracy by giving Minnesotans maps that represent the geographic, demographic, and partisan make up of our state.

The practice of gerrymandering often allows politicians to choose their voters as opposed to voters having the ability to choose who represents them. Such a dynamic explains why relatively few districts across the country and here in Minnesota are considered competitive.

This naturally results in too many legislative districts becoming sorts of echo chambers, where elected officials are listening to fewer and fewer constituents who share similar ideologies and demographics rather than listening to broader bases of voters who hold differing beliefs or priorities.

Next door in North Dakota a federal judge recently held that their maps violated the Voting Rights Act by diluting the voting strength of two Native American tribes and ordered that new districts be drawn.

On the flip side of that, under this plan, tribal nations and communities of interest would be prioritized in drawing district lines, while ensuring that the make-up of the commission will represent the demographic and geographic diversity of Minnesota.

At a time when democracy is under attack across the country, opening up the redistricting process to bring in more transparency will put the interests of communities across Minnesota ahead of any political motivations of the politicians who govern them.

In a similar vein, ending the legislator to lobbyist self-dealing cycle will strengthen Minnesotans' trust in this institution and the way in which decisions are made.

"Democracy" is more than the simple act of participating in elections. It is a collective practice that includes how legislative districts are drawn and who has influence in our legislature and how that influence is exerted. Our organization's members care deeply about the state of our democracy and actively participate in that collective practice.

That is why TakeAction Minnesota supports this amendment, and we urge this committee to support it as well.

Sincerely,

Robert Haider
Legislative Director
TakeAction Minnesota