

Hello Chair Murphy and Vice Chair Klevorn,

LWVMN really appreciates all the great work you both and the committee have been doing to get all this public feedback. It has been wonderful to see the public participation in this cycle of redistricting.

As the committee wraps up hearing public testimony, I wanted to follow up to the question Chair Murphy posed to me in the first hearing about the definition from Wendy Underhill at NCSL. It is correct that communities of interest can be "geographic areas, such as neighborhoods of a city or regions of a state, where residents have common political interests." (I pulled that quote from the NCSL Redistricting Law 2020 reference book, page 78).

However, LWVMN encourages you to consider a clearer and more inclusive definition of communities of interest when drafting its maps. That definition, alone, is likely oversimplified without additional context.

For example, one might argue that a relationship with an incumbent or a political party is a "political interest" that might become the basis for a community of interest. But this could give rise to maps that attempt to favor a particular political party. For this reason, Colorado, for example, specifies that a community of interest "does not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates." (Colorado Constitution, Article V, section 46(3)(b)(IV)).

That definition also may not encompass important economic and cultural characteristics that have been used by legislatures and courts and accepted by courts across the country. For example, the Minnesota Special Redistricting Panel in past years used a more robust definition of communities of interest and clarified that it includes "social, geographic, political, cultural, ethnic, economic, or other" interests (*Hippert v. Ritchie*, A11-152, 2012).

As noted in our original written testimony, this inclusive and clearer definition of community of interest has been used in Minnesota for decades. As the committee considers the public testimony it has received, LWVMN hopes that the committee recognizes the importance of a more detailed definition that brings clarity to the discussion.

Thank you for your time, and please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions.

**NICK HARPER, ESQ.**

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