

May 5, 2021

Dear Chair Scott Newman, Chair Frank Hornstein, and Members of the Conference Committee:

I am a constituent from Saint Paul and a U.S. foreign service officer currently serving in Israel. I am writing to support HF 1684 – specifically sections 42 (Remote Application) and 54 (License Expiration and Renewal Exceptions).

Both sections are important for U.S. foreign service officers domiciled in Minnesota, and working abroad on federal government orders. The changes will provide an online driver's license renewal process for Minnesotans, as well as an extension of the license expiration date for U.S. federal employees working overseas, for these employees' spouse or domestic partner, and for their minor children.

The U.S. Congress has designated annually the first Friday in May as National Foreign Service Day, when our nation remembers the U.S. diplomats who lost their lives serving abroad. As we approach May 7 and while the conference committee meets this week to discuss the policy and fiscal implications of the transportation bill, please consider the everyday service and sacrifices of Minnesota's U.S. foreign service officers. These officers currently work at some of our more than 270 U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. Foreign service officers spend two-thirds of our careers overseas, usually on assignments ranging from one year to four years.

I have served in Sierra Leone during an Ebola outbreak; in Thailand when an explosive device was detonated just blocks from the U.S. Embassy; and in Washington, D.C. working on humanitarian affairs and commercial/trade issues. All this work has been, and continues to be, an enormous privilege and I am proud to make a difference every day to protect the American people and American interests.

I am glad to see that Minnesota's domicile laws have enabled me to still call it "home" while I serve elsewhere. In every country where I have served there has been a Minnesota state connection. For example, I have issued visas to unite families in Minnesota or to allow an international student to study at one of our fine institutions of higher education, and I promote companies and goods from Minnesota.

Being a foreign service officer does, however, present numerous challenges. Even the most routine things such as renewing a driver's license can become insurmountable when security situations overseas, a medical evacuation, or a worldwide pandemic that closes international airports and shuts borders, prevent overseas federal employees from returning to Minnesota. Some of these things could be made easier if members of the U.S. Foreign Service were recognized in Minnesota state law in the same way as members of our esteemed U.S. military. Some states such as California, Virginia, and Maryland already provide driver's license renewal exceptions and a remote application process for foreign service officers.

As you know, American diplomats bravely work alongside their U.S. Department of Defense counterparts — often in the same dangerous places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. And we need our driver's license in order to operate a vehicle overseas – a necessity made even more

crucial if we serve in countries where we cannot take public transportation because it is not safe for us.

Please remember, too, that diplomatic spouses and dependents also make sacrifices as they accompany our service, and they should be included as well.

I urge your full support of the changes proposed by the House in the sections related to Remote Application, and License Expiration and Renewal Exceptions. Help U.S. foreign service officers obtain and renew our Minnesota driver's license so that we can effectively serve America abroad.

Thank you for your attention and time,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Boa Lee".

Boa Lee
431 Hoyt Avenue East
Saint Paul, MN 55130