

March 12, 2024

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to create open, honest, and accountable government, more information about our work at www.commoncause.org.

We are grateful to Rep. Ginny Klevorn, for moving HF4593 the With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment community bill. **Over 990 Minnesotans from across the state have submitted written statements to the Senate Elections Committee supporting the companion bill to HF4593**, getting its first reading, and referred to that committee March 13th.

Over 675 written statements have been submitted to members of this committee and leadership in support of HF4593, over 400 in the past 24 hours alone.

We are asking that members of the committee, to boldly stand with grassroots and community that have worked for over 5yrs to move a grassroots-facing independent redistricting commission reform bill. Building a “multiracial democracy” requires co-creating it partnership and allyship with constituency - particularly those disparately impacted by redistricting. HF4593 is MN specific and community driven. We leveraged national partners to align national best practices and lessons learned with community’s vision. National perspectives do not replace local experience.

HF4593 has been in the making since 2018. It is the ONLY bill before the committee that contains recommendations and ideas from across the aisle and chambers. It is also the ONLY bill before the committee that is the direct work of Minnesotans directly impacted across the state, their authentic allies and stakeholders. Together we proved in 2021 that community CAN lead the work of drawing its community of interest maps, negotiate among themselves what those maps ultimately represented AND informed the statewide Unity Maps. We came together moving the needle for many BIPOC communities across the state; particularly for the largest four Native Nations in central MN.

Politicians failed our communities for 6 decades. Now politicians move a bill they believe is “best” for us and our most disenfranchise communities. Politicians, and their allies, define what We The People get and they control the process of deciding what it looks like, who is “overseer” to their process they are comfortable with and to what extent community’s interests are centered. This is exactly why these reforms must come from Minnesotans and not politicians. Co-creating an inclusive democracy should require we rely on partisan benevolence. We don’t need benevolence; we need authentic allies and partners who work alongside with communities AND can stand with us. Power doesn’t give up power easily.

Key factors we consider when assessing proposed reforms or making sure our work is aligned with our values are below. **No other bill presented on redistricting meets these to the scope and breadth that HF4593 does.**

- where did the proposed bill language come from,
- whether proposed policies allowed for direct and meaningful participation from impacted Minnesotans, and trusted community voices outside of the traditional stakeholders,
- whether the final bill includes the voice and experiences of impacted Minnesotans,
- whether there is inclusive and equitable representation that is meaningful among those making the decisions on what the bill proposes, and
- whether there is parity in power among those decision makers at the table creating proposed policy.

To our knowledge, having been working in partnership with a network of BIPOC partners, members, allies, and stakeholders since 2018 - The Establishment Bill also being heard today, primarily moves politicians' ideas stemming from the Ohio reform model being informed by the same national partners. It also contains minor clarification language from the community's HF4593, the With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment community bill however nothing meaningful to impacted communities who worked so hard for the past 5yrs to co-create HF4593.

We respectfully ask members of this committee, and Rep. Long, to boldly stand with community members – and statewide allies like the 675 who've already sent written statements in support of the community's bill, and 990 to the Senate Elections Committee members - in support HF4593 instead of moving a separate bill. We respectfully ask you to ally with Rep. Klevorn and our Senate Chief Author, Senate Assistant Majority Leader, Sen. Fong Hawj, in co-creating a people not politicians redistricting reform bill that is standalone and meets the legal requirements for a valid constitutional amendment for the 2024 election.

Thank you for your dedication to all Minnesotans as you work in committee.

Annastacia Belladonna-Carrera
Annastacia Belladonna-Carrera,
Executive Director



To committee members House Elections and Finance Committee:

I am writing in support of HF 4593. This bill provides for an independent redistricting commission which will have the very best chance of reflecting the needs and desires of the diverse population of Minnesota. Selection of commission members will be greatly impacted by an advisory body which reflects Minnesota's diverse population. The work of the commission will be required to take into account the various, numerous communities of interest in the state, including Native American populations. The timelines for the commission's work are appropriate to allow for any legal action which could arise. The principles and criteria for drawing the lines are well defined and necessary to have a fair result for everyone, as much as is humanly possible. This system should be implemented for the 2030 redistricting cycle.

While the prospect may not appeal to members of the legislature, who have an interest in maintaining control of this process, the right thing to do is to give the people of the state, who you represent, the power to make sure we have maps as fair as they can be in a human system.

Please support HF 4593

Respectfully submitted,
Gary C Fifield
St. Paul, MN

1821 University Ave West, Suite 202
St. Paul, MN 55104

March 12, 2024

Hello Chair Freiberg and members of the House Elections Committee, my name is Vang Xor Xiong and as a community organizer and young voter I urge you all to support the HF 4593 to ensure that our redistricting process reflects an intersectional, inclusive & democratic process.

Although my family immigrated to MN in 2006 and we eventually became new Americans, it took 10 years before my parents could be considered active voters. As a youth I had to translate & interpret for my parents so that they could vote, because they didn't have voter resources and access through the government. At the time I didn't really understand the power behind voting until community organizations who understood the importance of civic engagement and providing access to shaping our democracy intentionally created space & access for me to play a critical role in shaping our democracy as a New American and as a youth.

In 2019 - 2021, I worked with other BIPOC leaderships to develop the Minnesota Census Communication and Mobilization Plans, outreached & engaged with youth & young Asian Minnesotans on the 2020 Census. We led various conversations with community members to create community of interest maps. These maps were part of a larger unity map that was submitted by the Corrie Plaintiffs, one of the four formal parties involved in the Special Redistricting Panel.

While leading conversations and workshops on the community of interest maps, for many youth participants, it was our first time being invited to these state & institutional decision making tables, myself included. Throughout my teens and young adulthood, I've always heard the saying that "youth are our future" and yet there's very little structure and access to set up for youth to provide input, solutions & be part of the decision making table. However, HF 4593 the With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment bill would establish structures and access for youths and young people to continue to provide insights, community driven solutions and see ourselves in critical decision making spaces.

As someone that's worked with other youth and young Asian Minnesotans for the last 6+ years, I can confidently say that we as youth and young people want to be involved in shaping our future and democracy. So once again, I ask you all to support HF 4593, With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment Bill so that youth can continue to be the leaders of today for our collective democracy and future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vang Xor Xiong", written in a cursive style.

Vang Xor Xiong
Organizing & Partnership Director at Asian American Organizing Project



March 11, 2024

Chair & Representative Mike Freiberg
House Elections Finance and Policy Committee
c/o Simon Brown, Committee Administrator
Room 200, Minnesota State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Testimony for HF4593 - Chief Author Rep. Klevorn

Dear Chair Freiberg and Members of the House Elections Finance and Policy Committee,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. Together, we envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate, and where their **government is representative, accountable and responsive** to the community's interests.

At the heart of our defense of democracy is our **commitment to redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for transparency and public participation**. Many of the changes that have been advanced by the legislature to improve and expand access to the ballot are ineffective if representative maps are manipulated to achieve a predetermined outcome. To that end, we have been actively involved in support of full census counts and people-powered fair maps for all Minnesotans for decades, and most recently, through our active participation in the Minnesota Census Mobilization Partnership, Our Maps Minnesota campaign, and the Minnesota Census and Democracy Partnership - all convened by the Minnesota Council on Foundations.

Working in active collaboration with community partners who are among those most impacted by maps that do not reflect the interests and needs of voters and communities, we have worked together with HF4593 bill authors to craft the ***With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment bill***, a standalone, people-centered, grassroots redistricting reform bill moving an independent redistricting commission that reflects the inputs and concerns of impacted communities. This bill also reflects best practices from the four states which currently have

independent commissions and includes provisions to address the lessons learned nationally from the most recent redistricting cycle. We feel that this bill best addresses interests and concerns of Minnesotans with respect to commission selection and composition, redistricting principles, and the provisions for public involvement while also incorporating the voices and input from communities of interest and ensuring diverse community representation. **We therefore stand in full support for HF 4593 and request your support.**

LWV Minnesota is aware that HF 4598 is also under consideration to advance redistricting reform. We are hopeful that continued discussion can lead to a single bill that can be supported by all stakeholders while also supporting the interests of Minnesota voters in having representative maps that provide for representative and responsive government where all voices, especially those of impacted or marginalized communities, are heard and supported.

We thank all the bill authors for their leadership on this important issue to ensure people-powered fair maps here in Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Michelle Witte
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Minnesota
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Paul Huffman
Election and Redistricting Policy Coordinator
League of Women Voters of Minnesota
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Testimony of David F. Fisher, Clean Elections Minnesota

MN House Election Finance & Policy Committee 03.13.2024

Chair Freiberg, members, I'm David Fisher, a volunteer on behalf of Clean Elections MN, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working for inclusive and healthy democracy. We urge your support for BOTH HF4785 and HF4593. At the same time, we have not taken a position on either a year-round legislature or the bundling of constitutional amendments into one initiative.

We do strongly support reasonable limits on the ability of legislators to lobby their former colleagues after they have left office. And, we strongly support creation of an Independent Redistricting Commission. In short, we support integrity in our election process and results.

Elections should be decided by voters, not by the very politicians competing for the support of those same voters. Every voice should be heard and every vote should be counted equally.

But in many states, politicians draw their own district lines in order to pick their own voters and protect themselves on reelection.

Well the trend is changing. Today more than 21 U.S. states have some form of non-partisan or bipartisan redistricting commission, and although some have had their hiccups the reforms still work better than when maps were drawn in secret, behind closed doors.

In July 2018 the Brennan Center for Justice released research into redistricting commissions after interviews of more than 100 stakeholders involved with redistricting in seven jurisdictions. What they found was “a compelling case that putting commissions in charge of redistricting can significantly reduce many of the worst abuses associated with redistricting and improve outcomes and satisfaction across the stakeholder spectrum — but only if commissions are carefully designed and structured to promote independence and incentivize discussion and compromise.”

Based on its research, the Brennan Center recommended that reforms to maximize their independence and effectiveness:

- An independent selection process coupled with an element of randomness.
- Clear criteria for map drawing.
- A commission of nine to 15 members to ensure diversity and guard against deadlock.
- Map-approval rules that require at least some support from each major political block.
- Strong transparency requirements that make commission proceedings accessible and assessable.
- An enforceable guarantee of adequate funding for its operations.
- A timeframe allowing time to hold public hearings, obtain feedback, make necessary adjustments, and draw final maps.

Each of HF4785 and HF4593 address each of these reforms, and again urge your support.

We also join the League of Women Voters in hoping that a single Bill can come together quickly that reflects best practices and lessons learned from across the country and can be supported by all stakeholders, especially those of impacted or marginalized communities.