



May 7, 2022

The Honorable Michael Nelson, Chair
House State Government Finance and Elections
Committee
585 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Chair
State Government Finance and Policy and Elections
Committee
3103 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Chair Nelson and Chair Kiffmeyer:

Thank you for your consideration of House File 4293, and the critical role that technology plays in connecting Minnesotans to each other and to state government. Whether Minnesotans are seeking recreational or professional licenses, or securing support during hardships, Minnesotans deserve modern, secure, and efficient technology services that improve outcomes for everyone. Continued investment in the technology that securely delivers these services amidst a rapidly evolving threat landscape is essential.

The Governor's budget recommendations, included in the house position, recognize this important need by investing in additional cybersecurity tools to reduce risk in a fluid cyber threat landscape – providing resources for a strategic approach to application modernization, supporting an accelerated adoption of cloud technology, and supporting digital accessibility. Further, state support for the primarily federally-funded state, local, tribal, and territorial grant cybersecurity program ensures steps will be taken to reduce statewide risk. These critical initiatives are described in more detail in the enclosed handout.

Over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the central role technology plays in our daily lives, as well as the need for rapid technology solutions when emergencies occur. We also witnessed the continued increase and constant evolution of cyber threats originating from criminal networks, nation-state actors, and geopolitical conflicts. The significant technology debt that the state carries in the form of aging technology not only hampers efficient and effective engagement with Minnesotans and our external partners, but it also puts at risk the delivery of critical government services. Now is the time to address these threats and lay a modern technology foundation. The choice is clear. Minnesota can accept increasing cyber risk and the constraints that aging technology puts on our ability to innovate, or we can make a significant leap forward in securing and modernizing our technology environments to transform the way Minnesotans interact with their government.

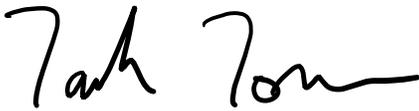
Minnesotans expect government services that are secure, easy-to-access, and that promote the efficient delivery of services and use of taxpayer dollars. The Senate position fails to meet these expectations from Minnesotans – and the demands of operating mission-critical technology systems in the midst of a shifting cyber threat landscape – by omitting the Governor's proposed investments in the area of information technology. As the State's Chief Information Officer, I must express my serious concerns with the exclusion of these investments from the Senate position.

I would also like to reiterate my concern with the Senate's provisions in the bill pertaining to livestreaming election-related activities in addition to those already noted from the perspective of elections administration. The language would require Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) to maintain video archives and provide public access via the web to thousands of hours of video data from ballot drop box locations and absentee ballot handling locations that may contain

private data. The Senate position fails to fully fund the technology and storage needs associated with managing and providing access to this volume of data over time. In addition, it is unclear in the bill what entity would be serving as the data owner – that is, the entity with the appropriate subject matter expertise and authority to make determinations about data classification and data redaction. While the bill states that the MNIT Commissioner “may obscure private data,” it fails to provide the resources necessary for what would be a highly labor-intensive process of video review and redaction or obfuscation.

It is my responsibility to relentlessly advocate for the ways that technology can improve outcomes for the people of Minnesota. MNIT looks forward to working with the conference committee to ensure that the agency is best positioned to build upon the successes of the past several years, and to deliver secure, modern technology services in coordination with our state agency business partners. As private and public sector organizations continue to focus on technology investment in the midst of rapid digital service opportunities, we are eager to work with conference committee members to reach an agreement that lays the foundation for similar advancements in state government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tarek Tomes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tarek Tomes
Commissioner and State Chief Information Officer

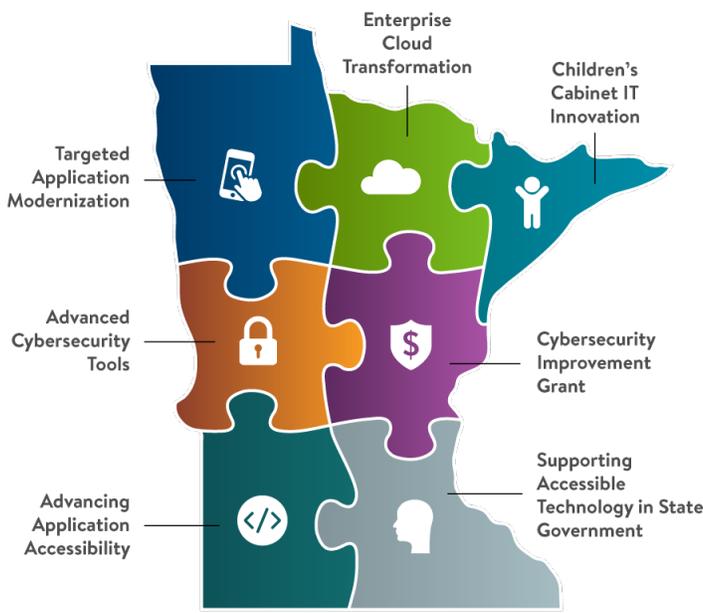
Enclosure

THE WALZ-FLANAGAN BUDGET



TO MOVE MINNESOTA FORWARD

Moving Technology Forward for Minnesotans



Aging technology increases cyber and operational risk and makes it more challenging for Minnesotans to access services. Modernizing this technology via cloud service platforms will reduce risk, improve resilience, and transform Minnesotans' experience when interacting with state government.

The Walz-Flanagan budget recognizes that without critical technology investments, state systems and services are subject to increased cybersecurity and resiliency risk. Funding proposals included in the state budget address these pressing risks – representing an all-encompassing approach to bolstering the state's cybersecurity protections and response capabilities.

Cybersecurity Proposals

Cybersecurity Improvement Grant



State funding is necessary to receive federal cybersecurity funding available through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) – with 80% of the total funding used on projects supporting cybersecurity improvements for local government, while the remaining 20% would be available for MNIT to advance state cybersecurity initiatives. This funding would create a cybersecurity planning committee comprised of representatives from the state, counties, cities, towns, tribal government(s), and institutions of public health and education to develop a cybersecurity plan and guide investment decisions.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23 (State): \$2,327
- FY22-23 (Federal): \$11,299
- FY24-25 (State): \$3,502
- FY24-25 (Federal): \$7,173

Advanced Cybersecurity Tools



Malicious cyber actors take advantage of emerging geopolitical events and times of uncertainty. Funding more sophisticated cybersecurity defense layers will further protect state systems from increasing, ever-evolving cyber threats. These tools would safeguard state services for Minnesotans through the application of an additional defensive layer to the executive branch’s web infrastructure, improved identity management of our state system users, and enhanced rapid response and threat detection.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$9,185
- FY24: \$9,185
- FY25: \$3,000

Modernization Proposals

Targeted Application Modernization



At-risk and aging applications increase the State’s cybersecurity risk. Providing a unique funding source for targeted application modernization effort will enable the State to address existing application vulnerabilities to minimize cybersecurity risk and facilitate the redesign and modernization of government service delivery. MNIT will leverage this funding along with recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Council on Information Technology (now the Technology Advisory Council) to simultaneously use the Modernization Playbook to adopt modern business processes and improve user experience.

Requests amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$5,250
- FY24-25: \$14,625

Enterprise Cloud Transformation



State technology needs better resiliency, along with the ability to support fast-moving change and innovative state services. Providing funding for enterprise cloud transformation accelerates the transition for the executive branch from on-premises infrastructure to scalable, cloud-hosted infrastructure, which in turn improves the resilience of state technology services and applications and reduces the risk of successful cyber-attacks and IT service disruptions. Transitioning to the cloud will mean a more rapid evolution of state services, providing opportunities to use more modern IT solutions with commercially available platforms, along with enhanced security and recovery capabilities.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$12,400
- FY24-25: \$2,100

Children’s Cabinet IT Innovation



A dedicated funding source for interagency IT initiatives, prioritized through the Children’s Cabinet, will create operational efficiencies and promote innovations to improve outcomes for Minnesota’s children. Funding Children’s Cabinet IT innovation will help MNIT cover the cost for technology implementation, IT-related project expenditures, and accompanying government or contract staff for multiple projects per year, depending on the cost of each project. Centering Minnesota children and their families over agency structures by fostering innovative, intersectional, and inter-agency IT efforts will yield more integrated and efficient service delivery, and an improved user experience, for families.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$1,000
- FY24-25: \$2,000

Digital Accessibility Proposals

Advancing Application Accessibility



Funding to conducting an independent assessment of the digital accessibility of executive branch applications and online services will help MNIT identify gaps and opportunities to improve the accessibility of state technology. By understanding where Minnesota can enhance technology accessibility, the State can provide better experiences for customers, partners, and citizens who interact with the state government through online software and web-based applications and services. Findings from this assessment will shape a roadmap for addressing technology improvements in existing applications.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$256
- FY24-25: \$393

Supporting Accessible Technology in State Government



MNIT's Office of Accessibility requires ongoing support for its work focused on improving accessible government for all Minnesotans. Providing funding to support accessible technology in state government would allow the Office to continue to provide its current services in an environment of increasing expenses for personnel, among other necessary expenditures.

Request amounts (in thousands)

- FY22-23: \$150
- FY24-25: \$300