



**Letter to the MN House State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee
In Favor of an Independent Redistricting Commission, HF4593 and HF4598
April 4, 2024**

Chair Klevorn and Committee Members, my name is David Fisher. I teach at the University of Minnesota Law School and am a former Commissioner of the State of Minnesota and Metropolitan Council member. And, I'm an election judge in Hennepin County. I am also a volunteer for and today represent Clean Elections Minnesota.

We strongly support both HF4598 and HF4593 insofar as each support creation of an Independent Redistricting Commission. We do also strongly support reasonable limits on lobbying activity by former legislators as set forth in HF 4598. We have not taken a position on flexible legislative sessions or on the bundling of constitutional amendments into one legislative initiative.

Clean Elections Minnesota is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization working for an inclusive and healthy democracy in Minnesota. In short, we support integrity in our election process and its results, and we endorse the notion that while not all Minnesotans agree on everything we all should believe in American Democracy.

In supporting establishment of an independent redistricting commission, Clean Elections believes that elections must be decided by voters, not by the politicians competing for the support of those very same voters. The foundation of our Democracy, our chosen system of governance, is the proposition that each and every one of us have value; that each and every one of us has a say; that each and every one of us - if we are truly to be free – has the right to be heard; that each and every one of us has the right – indeed the obligation – to vote and to have that vote counted.

But in many states, politicians draw their own district lines in order to pick their own voters, marginalize others, and protect themselves on reelection. This practice has had the greatest negative impact on those who historically or currently are overlooked or excluded from civic involvement, and limited in exercising an equal right to vote.

Well, the trend is changing. Today more than 21 states have some form of non-partisan or bipartisan redistricting commissions, and although some have had 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 in seven jurisdictions. They found “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 reforms to maximize the independence and effectiveness of these commissions:

- 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 requiring support from each major political block.
- Strong transparency that make commission proceedings accessible and assessable.
- An enforceable guarantee of adequate funding for its operations.
- A timeframe allowing for public hearings, obtaining feedback, making necessary adjustments, and drawing final maps.

HF4598 and HF4593 address each of these reforms – although HF 4593 more directly so – and again we urge your support. We particularly endorse the single-issue provisions of HF 4593.

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

Respectfully submitted,

David F. Fisher
On behalf of Clean Elections Minnesota