



April 6, 2022

Chair Nelson and members of the House State Government Finance and Elections Committee,

On behalf of the 837 members of the League of Minnesota Cities, we appreciate the opportunity to share written testimony regarding the League's positions on provisions contained in the HF4293 delete-all amendment, H4293-DE2.

**Expanding absentee ballot processing timeline:** The League supports the language that would extend the time for opening and processing absentee ballots and allow voters to deposit their absentee ballots in the ballot tabulator from 7 to 14 days, in Article 3, Sections 25 through 27. Those who vote in-person absentee prior to the seven days before election day much prefer to place their ballots directly into a tabulator. In the event that a ballot counter rejects a ballot due to marking errors, voters are able to correct errors and ensure that their vote is tabulated. Additionally, this legislation would give additional time to process absentee ballots which would provide administrative relief in the weeks leading up to election day.

**Absentee ballot drop box guidance:** Article 3, Section 23 provides direction pertaining to ballot collection logs and reports. While our elections administrators have been collecting much of this information already, this language provides explicit guidance for documentation and ensures uniform documentation of ballot drop boxes across the state. We support this guidance as it will provide clarity for our elections administrators.

**Absentee ballots applications distributed by non-government organizations:** Recent elections have demonstrated that the high volume of absentee ballot applications and sample ballots mailed to voters from committees and other private organizations often causes confusion in voters when they are led to believe that the communication is officially from a unit of government. The League supports the language in Article 3, Section 58 that makes clear that absentee ballot applications and sample ballots sent to voters by committees and private organizations are not official government mailings.

**Election official intimidation:** The League supports Article 3, Section 59, which provides a series of protections for elections officials performing official duties related to elections. Our members have reported concerns from election judges regarding their safety and increased questions regarding what they should do if their service as a judge is hindered by other individuals. Our local election officials view this provision as an opportunity to provide our valued election volunteers, judges, and staff confidence in their security and protection from harassment.

**Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds:** The League appreciates the appropriation to the Office of the Secretary of State alongside the funds from the Help America Vote Act to improve the administration and security of elections by providing educational materials to combat election misinformation, implementing physical security improvements for polling places, election workspaces, and other spaces supporting the administration of election, and additional efforts to strengthen elections administration and infrastructure.

**Municipal investment authority:** The League appreciates the inclusion of the additional investment authority provided for cities in Article 2, Section 56 and for the local government insurance trusts in Article 2, Section 57. The current investment authority under MN Stat 118A for local units of government and the low interest rate

environment has limited the ability of cities to realize higher rates of return. The State Board of Investment option in particular would expand the investment options available to cities and counties.

For the local government insurance trusts (the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust, the Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust and the Minnesota Association of Townships Insurance Trust), which insure member cities, counties and townships, the expanded investment authority commensurate with the authority currently provided to the State Board of Investment would enable long-term claims such as those for long-term workers' compensation claims, to be funded to a greater extent with the proceeds of invested set-aside funds rather than through higher insurance premiums funded through higher local property taxes.

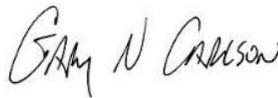
**Native landscapes:** The League continues to have concerns with the proposed language in Article 2, Section 67 of the legislation. While we appreciate the intent of the legislation to expand the ability of property owners to opt for properly managed natural landscaping, we feel that existing procedures for local elected officials to propose, discuss, and decide changes to local ordinance related to property and landscaping are the best way to deal with these issues. Additional resources, both financial and technical, from the state to encourage that choice by property owners and cities would be welcome.

**Cybersecurity Grant Program:** The League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the inclusion in Article 2, Sec. 29 of the bill that authorizes Minnesota IT Services to make grants as a part of a federal cybersecurity program authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58) that support efforts to address cybersecurity threats at the local level. We also appreciate the inclusion of the required state matching funds in Article 1, Sec. 6 that are required by the federal government in order for Minnesota IT to access federal cybersecurity grant program funding. Cyber threats to local governments continue to be a pervasive concern for cities across the state and direct funding to cities to address these issues is a critical first step in strengthening local government cyber defenses.

Thank you,



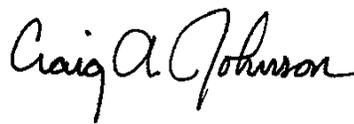
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