



MINNESOTA COUNCIL
ON FOUNDATIONS

a community of grantmakers

April 4, 2024

Re: Supporting the creation of an independent redistricting commission

Dear Chair Klevorn and members of the committee,

My name is Katina Mortensen, and I am the Vice President of Policy and Partnerships at the Minnesota Council on Foundations. MCF is a statewide association of more than 150 grantmakers focused on ensuring Minnesota has a strong charitable sector and an inclusive democracy where everyone can be seen, counted, and heard.

MCF supports the creation of an independent redistricting commission. Our current redistricting process has produced court drawn lines that aim to make the 'least change' from the status quo. Our current process also puts Minnesota at risk for extreme partisan gerrymandering if a trifecta is in place when it is time for redistricting.

An independent commission would promote a more inclusive democracy by establishing redistricting processes and principles that maximize community input and participation, allowing for Minnesotans to have a role in ensuring district lines reflect changing community needs and interests.

MCF knows firsthand the power of community-informed redistricting and what independent commissions can produce. During the 2021 redistricting cycle we partnered with 12 BIPOC-led and serving organizations to form the Our Maps MN Unity Cohort. This group led over 100 hours of training and education which drew participation from more than 400 community members. Through this engagement, more than 40 community of interest maps were produced.

The cohort then used these maps to draw a recommended legislative and congressional map that adhered to redistricting requirements set by federal and state law. The outcome was a community-led redistricting plan that kept communities of interest together, united Minnesota's northern Native communities in one congressional district, and more. The experience proved that an independent redistricting commission not only is possible but has the power to produce maps that truly reflect Minnesota's communities. Furthermore, **this experience showed that not only do historically underrepresented communities desire to be engaged in the redistricting process, but they can in fact lead the process.**

Since 2018, there has been consistent work by many community groups to craft and advocate for an independent redistricting commission bill, and the bill has been strengthened after the community efforts during the last redistricting cycle described above. **HF4593 reflects deep community engagement and honors the wisdom, time, and experience of those that participated in bringing community voice to the 2021/2022 process.**



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MCF recognizes that the committee is hearing two bills which aim to create an independent redistricting commission. Creating an independent redistricting commission would significantly improve our current redistricting process. MCF urges the legislature to draw heavily from the community-crafted concepts and ideas in HF4953 in creating a final compromise bill.

Thank you to the committee for your leadership and interest in redistricting reform and for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am happy to answer any questions or provide further information.

Sincerely,

Katina Mortensen
Vice President of Policy and Partnerships
Minnesota Council on Foundations