



March 11, 2024

Chair & Senator Jim Carlson
Senate Elections Committee
c/o Beth Fraser, Committee Administrator
Room 1200, Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave W
St Paul, MN 55103

Re: Testimony for SF 4785

Dear Chair Carlson and Members of the Senate Elections 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.

SF 4785 moves two additional "good government" reforms alongside redistricting, under a single constitutional amendment. The League of Women Voters remains neutral at this time with regard to the additional reforms being proposed along with redistricting, as we've not had ample time to study these issues. We strongly encourage legislators, however, to prioritize a standalone redistricting bill that enhances transparency and accountability for Minnesota

voters as they consider the proposed changes, and provide clarity to voters regarding the purpose of the changes being proposed.

With respect to the redistricting provisions in SF 4785, we feel there are many redistricting best practices reflected, but also some significant omissions that result in the bill not taking full advantage of the 5 years of community and stakeholder input that LWVMN and its partners have had to ensure redistricting reform in Minnesota is the best it can be for the people and impacted communities that are unique to our state. We strongly encourage the bill authors to add robust language for measures to assure diverse commission representation, provide for establishment of a citizen advisory commission should the constitutional amendment be unsuccessful, and to ensure that the independent commission will be in place for the 2030 redistricting cycle.

We are hopeful that continued discussion with bill authors can lead to creation of a bill that reflects best practices, as well as lessons learned, from redistricting efforts across the country, and that can be supported by all stakeholders while also meeting the interests of Minnesota voters in having congressional and legislative 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,



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