

March 11, 2024

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to create open, honest, and accountable government, more information about our work at [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org). Minnesota is home to over 18,000 statewide Common Cause MN multipartisan members and despite belonging to various MN party affiliations, or not being affiliated, the one thing they've come together to do is support our work ensuring our Republic's democracy is safeguarded, and everyone's vote counts.

**We are grateful to Sen. Port for introducing SF4785 creating an independent redistricting commission and prioritizing a long overdue debate on the best model, process and redistricting principles placing Minnesotans first; ahead of politicians, political parties and special interests.**

Since 2018 Common Cause MN and our statewide network of BIPOC partners, members, allies and stakeholders have been working to pull together policy that is grassroots-facing and that contains direct feedback from those most impacted by any proposed reforms. It's been work over five years in the making. The With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment, HF4593 is that work.

When assessing the policy impact of proposed democracy bills, we use an equity impact assessment tool.

Some key factors we consider when assessing a proposed bill's policy impact on disenfranchised Minnesotans and other impacted communities are:

- where did the proposed bill language come from,
- whether proposed policies allowed for direct and meaningful participation from impacted Minnesotans, and trusted community voices outside of the traditional stakeholders,
- whether the final bill includes the voice and experiences of impacted Minnesotans,
- whether there is inclusive and equitable representation that is meaningful among those making the decisions on what the bill proposes, and
- whether there is parity in power among those decision makers at the table creating proposed policy.
- who is impacted? Were those specific communities engaged in the analysis and solutions identified/proposed.
- what disparity is being addressed? Identify any current disparity and did they state the racial equity purpose of the policy, if any.
- are there potential negative impacts? If so, did they adjust the policy to achieve a more equitable outcome.

- How would SF4785 change the situation? Did it explain what the proposal/bill seeks to accomplish and assess whether the policy can achieve any identified equity goals.
- Can SF4785 be sustainably successful? Is adequate funding, implementation strategies, and accountability mechanisms in place.

We believe that when co-creating an inclusive democracy, the “how” proposed policies come together are as important as “what” comes from the “how”.

SF4785 has some provisions that must be addressed to begin to start addressing the disparity in how Minnesotans experience democracy;

1. The model proposed has no provision in place to address the need for aligning diversity throughout the process and in the IRC that is ultimately seated.
2. There is no backup model that will move reforms regardless of whether it succeeds on the ballot, leaving BIPOC Minnesotans yet again with the “least change” approach and kicking the can to the Courts – for a 7<sup>th</sup> decade in 2023.
3. The process identified is not grassroots-facing, maximizing transparency, accountability or the degree of inclusivity from impacted communities that is required to proposed meaningful measure of reform.

Something is better than nothing approach doesn’t work for all Minnesotans.

HF4593 best places Minnesotans first. No other proposed bill contains the detail and direct engagement of both chambers and member of the aisle. No other proposed bill was written in partnership with impacted communities. Co-creating a democracy means that constituents are head and included in the process.

Democracy is how a free society resolves its differences. And to do that well, we must all agree the process of including direct input in the solutions proposed by impacted Minnesotans is fair, produces equitable outcomes, and reflects our communities, our values, and our priorities.

Thank you for your dedication to all Minnesotans as you work in committee.

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