

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
One strong united voice for Minnesota workers

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Honorable Members of the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee:

AFSCME Council 5 represents roughly 43,000 working Minnesotans across the state. Our mission is to advocate for excellence in services for the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.

Our advocacy work to improve public services and advance dignity, opportunity and prosperity for workers relies, in part, on the ability of our members to engage with elected decision-makers in a manner that is open and publicly transparent; this helps ensure that both elected officials, and the public, hear from the people doing the work. Foundational to this effort is our members' ability to monitor and participate in public meetings established under Chapter 13D, Minnesota's Open Meeting Law.

AFSCME Council 5 strongly supports S.F. 4297 which will strengthen our open meeting law in a way that facilitates greater public participation and monitoring by:

- 1) Enhancing the public's ability to monitor open meetings by allowing remote monitoring of the open meeting.
- 2) Ensures public comment periods, when offered by the public body, are a part of the open meeting, and therefore, broadcast to members of the public who may be monitoring remotely.
- 3) Clarifies that the location of the public comment period, if one is offered by the public body, is the same as the location of the open meeting.

We believe that the voices of constituents should matter to our elected officials and that it is important for the public to be able to see citizen comments, regardless of one's ability to attend a meeting in-person. Excluding public comments from the broadcast and digital archives of public meetings limits participation and effectively censors the diverse faces and voices of workers and residents alike.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this matter and ask for your support of S.F. 4297.

In Solidarity,

Bart A Andersen

Bart Andersen
Interim Executive Director

Ethan Vogel

Ethan Vogel
Legislative Director