



Minnesota Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee
The Honorable Kari Dziedzic
Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 3, 2024

Chair Dziedzic,

We write this letter in support of SF4597, the bill to allow faculty, staff and students at the University of Minnesota to unionize. The Inter Faculty Organization and the Minnesota State College Faculty are staunch advocates for academic freedom and fair labor practices. We believe that enabling faculty to organize collectively is not only just, but also essential for fostering a more equitable and inclusive academic environment.

The University of Minnesota is renowned for its commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service. However, as an institution that prides itself on promoting critical thinking and social responsibility, it is imperative that it also prioritize the rights and well-being of its faculty members. Current law effectively prevents 23,000 University of Minnesota workers from deciding whether they wish to join a union. The non-unionized mandatory units are outdated and make unionization virtually impossible. Current law also miscategorizes employees and creates a confusing split among workers performing the same jobs.

We have seen firsthand that unionization provides faculty with a collective voice, enabling them to advocate for their interests and concerns more effectively. It fosters a sense of solidarity and collaboration among faculty members, fostering a stronger sense of community and mutual support within the University or College. Moreover, unions can serve as important mechanisms for addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within academia, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

Unionization also helps address the growing precarity faced by many academic professionals, particularly adjunct faculty, and graduate student instructors. By negotiating for more stable employment contracts, job security, and benefits, unions can help alleviate financial stress and create a more sustainable career path for faculty members at all stages of their careers.

Faculty from across the state firmly believe that unionization is not only compatible with University and College missions and values, but also essential for upholding them. Faculty members at the U of M should be afforded the same opportunity. By supporting the effort to allow faculty to unionize, the University can demonstrate a commitment to fairness, transparency and respect for the contributions of all members of our academic community.

A common refrain among faculty is that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. By supporting this bill, you will create opportunities to improve the academic environment for faculty, staff, and students alike.

In Solidarity,

Jenna Chernega
President, IFO

Kevin Lindstrom
President, MSCF