

April 4, 2024

Minnesota Senate  
Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Avenue W.  
State and Local Government and Veterans Committee  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Dziedzic and Members of the State and Local Government and Veterans Committee:

I am writing as an eleven year employee of the University of Minnesota to voice my support for SF4597, to reform the MN Public Employee Labor Relations Act (PELRA). Passing this law would restore access to common sense employment units for thousands of University of Minnesota employees, and allow them to collectively bargain, should they so choose.

Under PELRA's current construction, over 6000 University employees are forced into a single bargaining unit (Unit 11 - P&A) with little shared commonalities in our work. This employment group has ballooned from 6% to over 25% of all University employees since its creation in 1980. As it stands, employees doing similar work are barred from organizing with one another, but must organize along the arbitrary lines of their employment group -- adjunct faculty seeking a voice on campus cannot organize with their tenure track colleagues, but instead must organize with accountants and athletic trainers, and they must do so across all 5 campuses.

The University of Minnesota administration has been well aware of the bargaining limitations currently imposed under PELRA for years, and they have made no movement to address the situation. Quite the opposite in fact, as the administration spent over \$500,000 opposing a 2016 unionization effort on the basis that PELRA prohibited P&A and tenure-track faculty from organizing together. In the 8 years since that effort they have not, to my knowledge, made any attempts to begin conversations aimed at reform of PELRA. It is only now that staff, faculty, and students have organized to directly appeal to the legislature that they claim to be open to a change, but only on their terms.

I urge you to pass this bill and listen directly to the students, staff, and faculty who seek a voice at the table in their workplace. Far from a radical change to labor law, SF 4597 will align the University of Minnesota with other workplaces, public and private, in allowing workers to form unions consistent with their job duties and location.

Sincerely,

Ian M Ringgenberg  
P&A Employee at the University of Minnesota