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Dear Chair Dziedzic and members of the Committee on State and Local Government and Veterans,

I'm writing in support of SF 3868 that would give more Minnesota cities, counties, and school districts the power to adopt ranked choice voting (RCV) for local elections, if they choose. While allowing for the broader use of RCV in Minnesota would have a wide range of benefits, perhaps the greatest positive impact would be felt by voters and candidates of color in the North Star State.

As the Director of Policy and Research for FairVote, a non-profit organization that studies election reforms, part of my job is to analyze the impact of ranked choice voting in practice. Over the last three years, I've co-authored two reports on the impacts of ranked choice voting and communities of color that I'd like to share with the committee.

I've attached a copy of the full report, titled *Ranked Choice Voting Elections Benefit Candidates and Voters of Color: 2024 Update*, and you can also find a digital version at: www.fairvote.org/report/communities-of-color-2024/. The prior version, published in 2021, may also be of interest. The 2021 version can be found at: www.fairvote.org/report/report_rcv_benefits_candidates_and_voters_of_color/.

Below are some of the key findings from the 2024 and 2021 versions of the report.

- A. **Candidates of color benefit from the RCV counting process.** We found that candidates of color earn more votes in later rounds of RCV elections than White candidates. This is a measure of power-building for candidates who have strong appeal as a backup choice.
- B. **Candidates of color pay no penalty when they run against other candidates of the same race or ethnicity.** One of the key advertised benefits of ranked choice voting

is that it prevents vote-splitting between candidates who appeal to a similar base of voters. We found that when a candidate of color is eliminated, ballots are more likely to transfer to other candidates of the same race or ethnicity.

- C. **Voters of color tend to rank more candidates than White voters.** In a case study of the 2022 Oakland mayoral race that builds on earlier findings, Black and Hispanic or Latino voters ranked more candidates than White voters on average. This is now the third study to find this same result for voters of color.

I and my colleagues at FairVote will be happy to answer any questions you may have about this report or our other research on ranked choice voting. You can reach me at dotis@fairvote.org.

Thank you for your consideration, and again, I encourage you to support SF 3868.

Sincerely,

Deb Otis

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Director of Policy and Research
FairVote