



March 6, 2024

RE: Senate File 3616

Dear Chair Fateh and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO) and the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), we are writing to you to provide feedback on Senate File 3616.

Though county and city election administrators support convenient poll locations, we have concerns regarding the prescriptive language in SF 3616 mandating counties and cities to establish a polling place rather than current permissive language authorizing counties and cities to designate absentee and early voting polling places prior to election day. Cities and counties spend considerable time planning how to efficiently designate polling places to meet voting needs in their communities.

Significant planning and resources are required to establish a temporary polling location with dozens of logistical details to be considered and mitigated to establish a safe, secure, functioning location. While we appreciate the longer timeline for notice that was amended into the bill in a previous hearing, we are still concerned that it is not enough time for elections budgets to be adjusted to accommodate new polling places.

When determining if, where, or when a temporary polling location will be established, election administrators must determine how to best utilize limited resources such as election judges, equipment, supplies, etc. in the most efficient way possible to meet the needs of the entirety of their jurisdiction. By allowing a non-governmental entity to determine city and county election administration requirements and spending, local elections administrators could potentially be forced to divert resources and staff from other elections administrative duties to comply with the request from a college, university, or student organization.

A historic number of changes affecting the administration of Minnesota's elections were approved by the legislature in 2023 including the authority for a city or county to establish temporary polling places. We are appreciative of the legislature granting this authority; however, we would request maintaining this as an option rather than changing it into a mandate before any statewide general election has been held since the authority was granted.

We feel that allowing election administrators the existing discretion and flexibility will allow them to make the best decisions regarding temporary polling places as they relate to their jurisdiction's voting needs as a whole. A temporary polling place on a postsecondary institution's campus may be part of the plan for an efficient and effective election, however it is already authorized under current law and should not become mandated if requested by the institution.

We also understand that this bill may not be re-referred to the State and Local Government and Veterans Committee. We would ask that this be heard in that committee as it would impact local governments' resources, staff, and administrative requirements.

We would like to thank Senator Mitchell for her willingness to meet with the stakeholders involved and for the amendment added in the Elections Committee that narrowed this bill to general elections and provided more notice time for local elections administrators, and look forward to continued discussions on this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Hassel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alex" and last name "Hassel" clearly distinguishable.

Alex Hassel
Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Olson". The signature is more stylized and less legible than the one above, with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Troy Olson
Government Relations Consultant, Ewald Consulting
Minnesota Association of County Officers