

INTER FACULTY ORG



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MN Senate Higher Education Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3219
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 7, 2024

Chair Fateh and Committee Members;

I write this letter to express our organization's support for SF4597, the bill to allow faculty, staff, and students at the University of Minnesota to unionize. The Inter Faculty Organization is a staunch advocate for academic freedom and fair labor practices, and 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 MN 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 The non-unionized mandatory units are outdated and make unionization virtually impossible.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. 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 and insecurity 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 the University's mission and values but also essential for upholding them. Faculty members at the University of Minnesota 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 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, Inter Faculty Organization