

March 7, 2024
Minnesota Senate
1200 Minnesota Senate Building
Higher Education Committee
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Members of the Higher Education Committee,

As a researcher in the University of Minnesota (UMN) Department of Pediatrics and former undergraduate worker in multiple appointments, I am writing to express my support for SF4597, which if passed would empower employees of UMN by reforming the Minnesota's Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA).

The existing language groups health sciences researchers like myself with employees whose backgrounds and workplace interests are unrelated to my own. Currently, career advisors, IT support, researchers, and a staggering number of other titles at UMN necessarily belong to the same collective bargaining Unit 12.

Our livelihoods as researchers are contingent on funding, a challenge not shared by most staff at UMN. Moreover, my graduate student and postdoctoral fellow colleagues perform the same work regardless of their funding source, yet independently funded researchers are not considered public employees. Similarly, some undergraduate students with specific scholarships (such as work study) maintain part time employment at UMN *identical* to students without scholarships, but they are excluded from any right to collective bargaining. SF4597 eliminates these barriers.

Researchers boost UMN's global profile, produce dividends in intellectual property, and enrich the education of young scientists. Passing the proposed reform to PELRA will allow us to advocate directly for our needs and strengthen the world class research for which UMN is known.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joseph Peterson
Researcher, UMN Dept Pediatrics