

STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



State Capitol • P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707
Office: (608) 266-7511 • Toll Free: (888) 437-9436
Sen.Bernier@legis.wi.gov • www.SenatorBernier.com

From: Senator Kathy Bernier
To: The Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 946
Relating to: whistleblower protection for municipal clerks who witness and report election fraud or irregularities.

Date: February 16, 2022

Hello fellow committee members and thank you for hearing my testimony today.

This is a simple bill. I'll quote half of the bill here: "No municipal clerk may be discharged, disciplined, demoted, or otherwise discriminated against in regard to employment, or threatened with any such treatment, as a reprisal because the clerk lawfully reported, or is believed to have reported, witnessing what the clerk reasonably believed to be election fraud or irregularities.

It is no secret to anyone in this room that I used to be a clerk. Municipal clerks are responsible for running elections. If they witness anything that interferes with a clean and honest election, they must be able to report that incident without fear of reprisal.

As I just stated, clerks run elections. Mayors don't run elections. Outside consultants don't run elections. Only the clerk, and the clerk's staff, must be involved in election administration.

This bill is necessary. It directly responds to the situation that occurred in Green Bay in the November 2020 election, when a clerk was forced and bullied out of her position (strike one) and administration of the election was delegated first to the Mayor (strike two) and later outsourced to a third-party group with partisan ties (strike three). This bill will also provide certainty for clerks in the future who will feel more empowered to speak out for truth and against wrongdoing.

Thank you for your consideration of this simple yet vital bill and I ask for your support in passing it.