

Paul E. Gazelka
State Senator

Senate District 9
Morrison, Todd, Wadena
and Cass Counties



Minnesota
Senate

MAJORITY LEADER

July 30, 2019

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz,

Thank you for your letter. We have the shared goal of making a divided government work for every Minnesotan. Last session was a success because we focused on passing a balanced budget and protecting Minnesotans from detrimental tax increases and divisive public policy.

Since our conversation last week and the letter that followed, my office has had conversations with Legislative Auditor Jim Nobles, and your general counsel has had conversations with Senate non-partisan counsel. Keep in mind, at any time a constituent may bring their concerns directly to their senator, the legislative auditor, or the many ways established in the executive branch you noted.

We launched this portal to seek answers to the problems at the Department of Human Services. To that end, we'll continue to gather complaints about waste, fraud, or abuse in state agencies through the designated portal and through regular constituent and agency contacts. We appreciate your concerns about the intent of the portal and we believe the intent is clear: a safe place for state employees to raise their concerns. However, we will be adding information on how to contact their legislator directly and contact information for the Office of the Legislative Auditor, and we'll follow the advice of Senate Counsel for any future language changes on the portal.

We intend to continue to provide oversight for the agencies in the executive branch as prescribed in the Minnesota State Constitution. As your letter states, "...the data practices act provides protections for employees and provides access to information that is necessary for good government to function." Subjecting the Legislature to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act would remove protections and access for everyday Minnesotans to contact their elected officials. Changing the current laws would likely have a chilling effect on civil discourse and engagement between constituents, subject experts, and elected officials.

No one department or government branch has a monopoly on preventing waste, fraud, and abuse. The legislature will continue to be a place where people can freely contact their elected officials with their opinions, concerns, and ideas for consideration. We can continue to work together respectfully for the best interests of Minnesota while we balance our constitutionally enshrined powers between the legislative and executive branches of government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Paul Gazelka".

Paul Gazelka
Majority Leader
Minnesota Senate
Senate District 9