

# Comment Report

HSB 670

A bill for an act repealing gender balance requirements for appointive bodies.(See HF 2540.)

Subcommittee Members: Bloomingdale-CH, Bossman, Zabner

Date: 02/08/2024

Time: 10:30 AM

Location: RM 19

**Name:** Sandy Wilson

**Comment:** Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of HSB 670.

**Name:** Gaylen Wobeter

**Comment:** Repealing the gender balance requirement for Iowa's Board and Commissions is a serious and misled step backwards. The law now reads that if the gender balance can't be achieved in 90 days after a serious search, then it is not required. This is not placing a hardship or problem on anyone, so there is not reason to repeal it. Keeping an effort toward gender balance is important as women are over 50% of the population. When they are appointed to a Board or Commission, they take this job seriously. Please vote no on this bill.

**Name:** Holly Oppelt

**Comment:** Current law recruits women to leadership positions, and serving on boards and commissions gives women experience, skills, and confidence to run for elected office. Current law ensures no one is left out, especially women. If Iowa wants to maintain its position as a leader, it must innovate and find ways to encourage women to take leadership roles to advance Iowa's position in government, business, and industry. Please vote no on repealing gender balance for appointive bodies.

**Name:** Shannon Patrick

**Comment:** When you have an umbrella out, you don't put it away because you're dry. You look and see how damp the people are who don't have one are. Iowa has made a lot of progress. I've seen that about 2/3 of our boards are gender balanced. This isn't perfect, but it's much better than other states, or even Iowa of ten years ago. In other words, the people around you are wet. Don't throw away the umbrella. Do not repeal this requirement.

**Name:** Linda Schreiber

**Comment:** Instead of ending the gender balance requirement, the Iowa legislature should support and recruit women. The current law's only requirement is that a 90-day search be undertaken to recruit women. Encouraging women to serve on state boards and commissions may encourage women to run for office. It would be wonderful if our elected officials achieved gender balance. History tells us gender imbalance will not correct itself. Too often women's voices are overlooked. If Iowa is to achieve fairness and equity, women must have leadership roles on its boards and commissions to achieve gender equity. Gender balance is good for Iowa. If Iowa wants to be a leader, it must maintain innovation and find ways to encourage women to take leadership roles to advance Iowa's position in government, business, and industry. Women represent 50% of the population. Facts show that women take responsibilities seriously. They are shouldering economic responsibility for their families. U.S. Census Quick Facts for Iowa reports the female civilian labor force population over 16 years is 62.7% for 2017-2021. Vote no on HSB 670 to show your support for

Iowa women.

**Name:** NICOLE SANDERS

**Comment:** Overturning the requirement to seek gender balance on boards accomplishes nothing and is a step backward for the state of Iowa. The requirement is not burdensome as it requires only that boards make a good faith effort to achieve gender balance within a window of 90 days. Boards are already complying with this requirement. This requirement assures that diverse voices are heard throughout Iowas boards, which benefits everyone. It acknowledges that women bring a unique and important perspective to governance. It also seeks to ensure a degree of representation of women when women are already underrepresented on state boards and in state government. The requirement to ensure gender balance on boards is an important way the state can value diversity in government. There is no good reason to repeal it. Please vote no.

**Name:** Jocelyn Krueger

**Comment:** Are we giving up on current law which only states boards should seek gender balance "if possible"??? It sounds like we are giving up on providing women with experience, skills, and confidence to run for elected office, create new organizations or businesses. So much for all the talk creating spaces for women. The rhetoric that says we must "protect women and women's spaces" only counts when punching down to our trans, nonbinary neighbors, or when attacking women's bodily autonomy. But when there is a fragile women's space created after generations of women fought to have representation and say in government and corporate bodies, instead of strengthening it, we throw it out the window. Hypocrisy!

**Name:** Terese Grant

**Comment:** Iowa has been a leader in ensuring that our Boards and Commissions are equally balanced with both men and women. We need to continue to encourage both men and women to participate where important decisions are made that benefit all Iowans. The current law ensures that no one is left out, especially women. Please continue to ensure that Iowa is a leader in maintaining gender balance on our Boards and Commission.

**Name:** Diane Duncan-Goldsmith

**Comment:** As you know HSB 670 will repeal Code section 69.16A which requires gender balance requirements on appointive bodies established in the Code. The bill will eliminate the gender balance requirements. There is absolutely no reason to make this change. Currently more than a third of our boards do not have gender balance, since women filling only 38% of all board positions in spite of the fact Iowas population is just about equally divided between men and women. Iowa boards have much more balanced compositions when compared to other states without this requirement. Almost all state boards and commissions already comply, so the current law is clearly not an obstacle. Therefore there is no need to repeal the law Current law only requires 90 days to apply a good faith effort to recruit to fill the gender balance requirement. So there is no reason to say boards cannot comply with the current guidance. Current law recruits women to leadership positions, and serving on boards and commissions gives women experience, skills, and confidence to run for elected office The current requirement encourages women to take leadership roles which continue to advance the states position in government, business, and industry. Facts show that women take responsibilities seriously. Women are shouldering economic responsibility for their families: U.S. Census Quick Facts for Iowa reports the percentage of the female civilian labor force population over 16 years is 62.7% for the period 20172021. On the eve of the pandemic, women's labor force participation rate was 59.2%. As of Sept. 2, 2022, it dropped to 58.4% reflecting women leaving the workforce to care for families and other responsibilities.