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St. Paul, MN 55104

March 12, 2024

Hello Chair Klevorn and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, my name is Vang Xor Xiong and as a community organizer and young voter I urge you all to support the HF 4593 to ensure that our redistricting process reflects an intersectional, inclusive & democratic process.

Although my family immigrated to MN in 2006 and we eventually became new Americans, it took 10 years before my parents could be considered active voters. As a youth I had to translate & interpret for my parents so that they could vote, because they didn't have voter resources and access through the government. At the time I didn't really understand the power behind voting until community organizations who understood the importance of civic engagement and providing access to shaping our democracy intentionally created space & access for me to play a critical role in shaping our democracy as a New American and as a youth.

In 2019 - 2021, I worked with other BIPOC leaderships to develop the Minnesota Census Communication and Mobilization Plans, outreached & engaged with youth & young Asian Minnesotans on the 2020 Census. We led various conversations with community members to create community of interest maps. These maps were part of a larger unity map that was submitted by the Corrie Plaintiffs, one of the four formal parties involved in the Special Redistricting Panel.

While leading conversations and workshops on the community of interest maps, for many youth participants, it was our first time being invited to these state & institutional decision making tables, myself included. Throughout my teens and young adulthood, I've always heard the saying that "youth are our future" and yet there's very little structure and access to set up for youth to provide input, solutions & be part of the decision making table. However, HF 4593 the With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment bill came from our collective effort and best positions us in the model, process and rules. It establishes structures and access for youths and young people to continue to provide insights, community driven solutions and see ourselves in critical decision making spaces.

As someone that's worked with other youth and young Asian Minnesotans for the last 6+ years, I can confidently say that we as youth and young people want to be involved in shaping our future and democracy. So once again, I ask you all to support HF 4593, With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment Bill so that youth can continue to be the leaders of today for our collective democracy and future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vang Xor Xiong", with some stylized flourishes.

Vang Xor Xiong  
Organizing & Partnership Director at Asian American Organizing Project