

January 24, 2023

Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of the Restore the Vote Act, H.F. 28

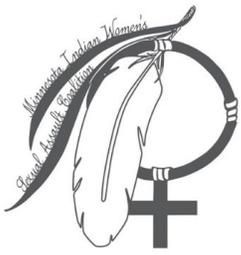
Dear Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC), the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA), Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) and the Minnesota Alliance on Crime (MAC), in community submit this letter to express our support for the Restore the Vote Act – HF 28/SF 26. Our membership serves victims/survivors of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and violent crime throughout the state of Minnesota. We advocate on behalf of our member organizations and individuals to lift the voices of victims/survivors at the legislature and beyond.

Minnesota's anti-violence coalitions support the restoration of voting rights for individuals convicted of a felony upon completion of their incarceration. Our member programs serve formerly incarcerated people who have been victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence and sex trafficking. Many were convicted of felonies related to that violence, such as prostitution-related crimes or assault in self-defense. The criminalization of victims/survivors for crimes related to their victimization is a profound injustice. All victims/survivors deserve to use their voices freely at the ballot box.

Restoring voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals is also a violence prevention strategy. The level of support, connection, and community integration formerly incarcerated people experience upon release is critical in determining whether or not they are likely to reoffend. Taking away a formerly incarcerated person's ability to have a voice at the ballot box only further isolates them. When people can engage in civic responsibilities such as voting, they are able to become more connected to their communities, which in turn helps them to build relationships and establish strong support structures.

Victims/survivors of violence want restorative, community-strengthening initiatives to help build safer, more engaged communities. People living in a community should



expect to have a role and a voice in issues that impact their community and their life, and formerly incarcerated victims/survivors of violence deserve to be heard at the ballot box. We urge you to restore their rights— please vote yes on House File 28.

In Community,

Nicole Matthews
Executive Director, MIWSAC

Artika Roller
Executive Director, MNCASA

Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director, VFMN

Bobbi Holtberg
Executive Director, MAC