



**Minnesota House of Representatives  
House Committee on Elections Finance and Policy  
January 11, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HF 110. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center’s Campus Vote Project educates and engages young voters on voting rights issues, working to institutionalize civic engagement and voting at university and college campuses, including in Minnesota.

Preregistration laws allow young people to preregister to vote before their 18th birthday, with the registration taking effect upon turning 18, regardless of when the next election occurs or when their birthday falls. Such laws have been shown in other states to improve registration rates and to increase the likelihood that these young citizens will vote upon reaching voting age.<sup>1</sup> These laws prepare our young people for a future with fewer barriers to vote, and assist students in developing early voting habits that will last a lifetime.

Younger citizens are a consistently underrepresented demographic group throughout our nation, in terms of both registration rates and voter participation. Preregistration is a crucial tool for increasing youth voter turnout by seamlessly adding them to the voter rolls and ensuring they receive important voting information in a timely manner. For example, election officials generally only provide information about precinct location changes or sample ballots to individuals who are already on the voter rolls.

Preregistration facilitates critical opportunities to provide voter registration services to young people in a centralized and coordinated way before they disperse to join the workforce or enroll in higher education. For example, preregistration at this age also

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McDonald & Matthew Thornburg, Registering the Youth Through Voter Preregistration, 13 N.Y.U.J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL’Y 551 (2010), available at <http://www.nyujlpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Michael-P.-McDonald-Matthew-Thornburg-Registering-the-Youth-Through-Voter-Preregistration.pdf>.

facilitates voter registration efforts in high school, allowing high school registration efforts to deepen their potential reach. Preregistration also increases administrative efficiency. Many young people preregistering to vote will likely do so through the department of motor vehicles or online,<sup>2</sup> which reduces the likelihood of typographical errors made on paper applications and saves money per registration. Additionally, election administrators are often inundated with new registrations close to an election. With preregistration, more registrations may be processed throughout the year, freeing up critical time for election officials during the busy election season.

A popular misconception about preregistration is that young people move around so frequently that their information would need to be updated before voting for the first time, thereby making preregistration a wasted effort. However, preregistered voters remain valid on the voter rolls at a rate similar to other registrants.<sup>3</sup> One study of preregistration programs in Hawaii and Florida, both states with 16-year old preregistration, concluded that, contrary to popular belief, preregistered voters are *not* “transients who will disappear once they graduate from high school.”<sup>4</sup>

Preregistration is a common-sense reform. Similar laws have garnered bipartisan support in other states.<sup>5</sup> HF 110 is a simple way of saying to young adults that their stake in the community is real and imminent, while also increasing election administration efficiency. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of this bill.

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Michelle Kanter Cohen, Policy Director and Senior Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at [mkantercohen@fairelectionscenter.org](mailto:mkantercohen@fairelectionscenter.org).

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<sup>2</sup> For example, soon after launching online system, Pennsylvania officials announced that applicants under 24 years of age were the largest group of online voter registration users.” Laura Benshoff, “In Pennsylvania, Online Voter Registration a Boon to Young Voters,” *Newsworks*, March 28, 2016, <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/pa-suburbs/92304-in-pennsylvania-online-voter-registration-a-boon-to-young-voters>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael McDonald & Matthew Thornburg, Registering the Youth Through Voter Preregistration, 13 N.Y.U.J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL'Y 551, 557 (2010), available at <http://www.nyuilpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Michael-P.-McDonald-Matthew-Thornburg-Registering-the-Youth-Through-Voter-Preregistration.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Id. at 567.

<sup>5</sup> Preregistration in Florida passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by a Republican governor. Likewise, when Louisiana lowered the preregistration age from 17 to 16 at the office of motor vehicles, the measure passed with strong bipartisan support and enjoyed unanimous support in the state senate.