



Healthy Democracy Healthy People Minnesota

April 30, 2024

Chairs Jim Carlson and Mike Frieberg,

Healthy Democracy Healthy People- Minnesota (HDHP-MN) is a nonpartisan coalition of health sector organizations united by our understanding that a healthy inclusive democracy serves as a foundation for the health and wellbeing of our communities. Studies reveal that communities with high voter participation enjoy greater social cohesion and better health.¹ Recent research has also shown a strong relationship between health outcomes and those policies that strengthen and protect democracy, including providing greater ability for students to vote on campus at their post-secondary institutions (HF 4772 Lines 22.7 – 22.12; Freiberg).^{2,3,&4}

We, as health faculty, researchers, students, and departments of Minnesota based universities, know firsthand that students can face numerous barriers to accessing the polls. Many are first-time voters who lack crucial information about where, when, and how to vote. Some students move to other cities or states for college and are unaware of polling sites and procedures in their new locations. Students are also less likely to own cars and thus lack access to transportation for off-campus voting. This bill would make on-campus polling locations available to more students. This would greatly reduce these barriers and increase civic engagement during early adulthood, which is positively associated with higher income and educational attainment. In particular, “voting and volunteering [among youth] are especially favorably associated with good mental health and positive health behavior”.⁵

Over 400,000 students are enrolled in postsecondary institutions in our state. Reducing barriers to student participation will not only strengthen our state’s democracy but also invest in the future civic leadership and health of Minnesota.

HDHP-MN stands firm in our assertion that our health is almost completely connected to our ability to influence the policy decisions that create the conditions necessary for health. For a democracy to be truly inclusive and representative, we must pass legislation that protects the right to vote for all Minnesotans. We strongly support this provision in the Elections Omnibus bill and urge the

¹ Nelson C, Sloan J, & Chandra A. (2019). [Examining Civic Engagement Links to Health](#). RAND Social and Economic Well-Being. (California: RAND Corporation: Santa Monica California).

² Tamara Rushovich, Rachel C. Nethery, Ariel White, and Nancy Krieger, 2024: [1965 US Voting Rights Act Impact on Black and Black Versus White Infant Death Rates in Jim Crow States, 1959–1980 and 2017–2021](#) American Journal of Public Health 114, 300_308, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2023.307518>

³ Schraufnagel, S. (2023). Voting Restrictions and Public Health: An Analysis of State Variation 1996–2020. State and Local Government Review, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X231202421>

⁴ Pabayo R, Liu SY, Grinshteyn E, Cook DM, Muennig P. Barriers to Voting and Access to Health Insurance Among US Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Lancet Reg Health Am*. 2021;2:100026. Published 2021 Jul 30. doi:10.1016/j.lana.2021.100026

⁵ Ballard PJ, Hoyt LT, Pachucki MC. Impacts of adolescent and young adult civic engagement on health and socioeconomic status in adulthood. *Child Dev*. 2019;90(4):1138–54. Epub 2018 Jan 23. [\[PubMed\]](#) [\[Google Scholar\]](#)



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Conference Committee members to ensure it remains included in the final Conference Committee report.

Best,

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