

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Clayton Byrd

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Former Capitol Pathways Intern at Minnesota Alliance With Youth, current Alliance Board Member

City of Residence: Ames, IA

Over the years, I have been able to experience the positive impact that the Minnesota Youth Council presents throughout the state of Minnesota. The Minnesota Youth Council has representative all throughout the state of Minnesota and helps promote youth voice to be present at the discussion table when important decisions are being made about youth for more equitable institutions. The Minnesota Youth Council does amazing work including the Youth Day at the Capitol, which provides youth access to legislators and discuss important issues pertaining to them. Experiencing Youth Day at the Capitol, I have seen first-hand the youth meeting and discussing with legislators about issues relating to education. I have also seen the Minnesota Youth Council in other ways, such as creating the Youth in Educational Leadership Summit, which was youth led and provided trainings and workshops on important issues that they can bring back to school to make positive changes. There are a plethora of other important projects that involve the Minnesota Youth Council and by having funding, this will allow the youth council to have more resources at their disposal which will create more opportunities to make a difference for youth all across the state.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Heather Weller

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Former Minnesota Youth Council member

City of Residence: Chicago

The Minnesota Youth Council allows young people a platform to use their voices. Too often, young people are marginalized and tokenized with the idea that youth are not developed enough to be informed. However, young people are the ones who are directly experiencing so many issues whether it be education, social justice, environmental issues and so much more. Youth voice is absolutely needed to inform policy issues and understand how they impact youth. Since young people under 18 are not able to vote, the MYC provides a platform to give youth a chance to express their opinions. This better informs how policies should be created and adapted as we learn from the people they will actually affect.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Jack Prince

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Former Minnesota Youth Council member

City of Residence: Wayzata

An organization like the Minnesota Youth Council (MYC) is more than just an important group of young people. It is a vital, necessary part of our legislative and societal structure. In a world where there are decisions being made daily about our educational experience, there is often little to no youth voice involved. While this may not look problematic to most people, this is only the fire fueling a much larger societal issue. How can effective systems or institutions be set in place without the voices and opinions of those who they effect? Such a hypothesis is not a radical view of our legislative system, because that's simply how it looks today. This is where the MYC becomes vital to decision making at a state level. This group of talented young people care about issues in their community more than anyone I have ever met. From such an array of backgrounds and experiences, they aren't just passionate about their communities or their schools, but they are passionate about making them better for all community members. MYC has spent almost 8 years coming up with strategic solutions to so many issues they care about. They have held dozens of congressional hearings on bills, some of which they have first-hand experience with. They have fought for youth voice in government, a voice that has been absent almost since the creation of our democracy. Substantial change in our contemporary society cannot be deemed substantial if those of the next generation don't have their voices heard. MYC is so important because they not only supply such a voice, but they can provide some of the most caring, enthusiastic, and intelligent ideas I have ever heard. Even from adults.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Jess Roberts

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Minnesota Design Center, University of Minnesota

City of Residence: Minneapolis

My experiences with the Minnesota Youth Council have been the highlight of my career. From a design perspective, it is essential that we involve young people to inform the future policies, places and employment opportunities of the region because they will be most impacted by these decisions. As resources become more scarce and our demographics become older and more diverse, it is essential that we find more creative solutions and it has been my experience that we need not look further than the young people of the MYC.

*Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf
(optical character recognition)*

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Mary Gorfine

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Program Coordinator Rochester-Olmsted Youth Commission and MYC Adult Partner for over 8 years

City of Residence: Rochester

My organization, the Rochester-Olmsted Youth Commission (YC) is supported by the City of Rochester and Olmsted County. YC is aimed at promoting intergenerational civic engagement and leadership opportunities for young people in our communities. Participating in the legislative process at the MN Legislature has given the young people with whom I have worked, opportunities to understand how decisions are made, the politics that influence those decisions, and the policies that drive changes focused on improving the lives of all Minnesotans. As an "adult partner" for Youth Commissioners who are members of the MYC I have watched young people from all corners of the state come together to share ideas, dreams, and plans for how they can contribute to the common good. They do not all agree on how to realize those plans and may not even share the same dreams for the future, but they learn that compromise, listening, and an inclusive perspective are all necessary parts of governing. As an adult partner I have learned so much from my years on the MYC and have been able to incorporate those concepts into my work on behalf of young people in Rochester and Olmsted County. We have surveyed young people about drug and alcohol use, with support from MYC we have held workshops to teach young people how to engage in civic affairs, we have worked to promote sustainability initiatives that our elected officials (Senator Dave Senjem) have supported, and we have engaged with elected officials around the state on issues important to teens. Working with the MYC has given Youth Commissioners experiences in state government that they would never have had otherwise. Where else would they have a chance to sit in a hearing room at the State Capitol and hear testimony by Senators and Representatives on legislation under consideration in our legislature? By taking time to come before an MYC group at a hearing elected officials are sending a message that youth are valued, and their voices are important. Do MYC members always agree on legislation or politics and policy? Of course not. The MYC includes teens from all cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. They are as diverse as any district in our state - probably more so. One thing is certain - they are the future of Minnesota, and they reflect the importance you place on youth voices in government. We are so thankful that you created the MYC, and we need your support to continue welcoming them into the legislative process.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Shreya Ram, and I am a second-year undergraduate student at the University of Chicago. I was a representative for congressional District 3 on the Minnesota Youth Council (MYC) from September 2016 to June 2019 and served as the Policy Committee Co-Chair for two years. I am writing in full support of the MYC Funding Bill.

The MYC fundamentally changed my high school experience and vision for the future. At school, I was encouraged to participate in academic extracurricular activities like debate or speech that helped strengthen my rigorous thinking skills but failed to extend actions to actual *advocacy*. But as a representative for the MYC, I felt that I was making actual change in my community. Many of these changes were substantiated through events; Youth Day at the Capitol, a hearing for our omnibus bill, and the verbal presentation of legislation that affects youth to our council helped me realize that people in the state legislature and beyond were taking our voice seriously. But beyond these events, the MYC creates a space in which the most important voice in the room is the voice of youth. All too often in public policy, the perspective of younger individuals is deemed insignificant. However, it is unrepresentative for legislation that impacts youth to be passed or implemented absent the perspective of youth. Providing the MYC with greater funding would give the organization the necessary leverage to ensure that the voices of council members and youth in the state of Minnesota as a whole are heard. While I am incredibly proud of the accomplishments during my time in the MYC and in the years since, there are grounds for more projects and growth, and funding is one of the key determinants in achieving those outcomes.

I would also like to note that being a part of the MYC has made me a better college student. In my conversations with peers and faculty, the lessons I learned from the MYC come up frequently and shape the way I think about course content. I wholeheartedly believe that passing the funding bill will help bolster the next generation of thinkers and educators by motivating more discourse about youth representation.

Sincerely,
Shreya



Representative Jim Davnie, Chair
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55103

Re: HF1314 (Morrison) - Minnesota Youth Council

March 4, 2021

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to emphasize the importance of the work of the Minnesota Youth Council (MYC) and the group of youth leader representatives who mobilize their fellow middle and high school students to be engaged in their communities and policymaking. Per Minn. Stat. § 124D.957, MYC is charged with providing advice and recommendations to the Governor on issues affecting youth; serving as a liaison for youth around the state to the Governor; and submitting an annual report of the council's activities and goals. Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan and Administration's goal is for authentic youth input in state policies and procedures that effect the everyday lives of young people in Minnesota. By inviting young people from MYC to participate and work in partnership with state officials, we are able to make meaningful decisions to ensure Minnesota is the best place for each and every child to grow up.

The Children's Cabinet prioritizes youth engagement through regular meetings with MYC, and we have hosted several engagement sessions to get their input to inform our work, including on key issues like vaping, mental health, educational equity and opportunity, and youth intervention programs. Since appointments to the Council were first made in November 2019, the Children's Cabinet Advisory Council has had two youth representatives, one of whom has always been a MYC Representative. We have had the pleasure of having the incredible voices and ideas of former MYC Representative Hufsa Ahmed, who was our first MYC Representative on the Council, and MYC Representative Salma Abdi currently serving on the Council. We are grateful to them for representing MYC and bringing their needed perspective as leaders and individuals directly impacted by child, youth and family policy.

The Children's Cabinet's goals to practice child-centered government and make Minnesota the best place for children and youth to grow up cannot be accomplished without engagement and partnership with Minnesota youth. We are grateful to the work of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth and MYC in amplifying the voice and power of the youth across the state – our current and future leaders.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Hogenson'.

Stephanie Hogenson
Policy Director
Minnesota's Children's Cabinet

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Raina Meyer

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Former Minnesota Youth Council member and current Adult Partner

City of Residence: Saint Paul

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Chair and committee members for hearing this crucial bill today. I would like to tell you about how the Minnesota Youth Council completely changed my life. It showed me what disciplined, compassionate public service looks like at a young age and gave me the firsthand experience that ignited my passion for policy-oriented change. Young people show their devotion to their communities in many ways, and for a long time, I wasn't sure how I was going to demonstrate that. The Minnesota Youth Council provided me with the resources and experiences (that I unquestionably would not have otherwise had) I needed to understand my true purpose in this world. Through meeting with legislators, reviewing grants, and connecting with youth of various backgrounds, I fundamentally changed as a person, becoming a more compassionate leader who is completely grounded in her convictions.

The Minnesota Youth Council is different from other organizations that connect youth with government in that it places youth directly at the decision making table. MYC representatives are taught skills they don't typically learn in a classroom, such as committee etiquette, the mechanisms of an omnibus bill, and the importance of lobbying. They learn to ask shrewd and clever questions of lawmakers, who are sitting at the same table as them while presenting their bill.

The true value of the Minnesota Youth Council lies in the confidence and skills it instills into the youth representatives who are involved in the organization. The youth representatives truly care about the work they are doing because they realize the gravity of their presence in these legislative bodies. I urge you to support funding the Minnesota Youth Council, because if it is supported and nurtured now, I have no doubt that it will continue to foster the necessary leadership in our young people that will build a better and brighter future for our state and country.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Adri Arquin

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Minnesota Youth Council Representative

City of Residence: Saint Paul

My name is Adri Arquin, I am a junior at Central High School and a representative on the Minnesota Youth Council, representing Congressional District 4, and speaking in support of HF 1314. Over the past two years, I have served as a part of the Minnesota Youth Council, working to represent the young people of Saint Paul. In my time as a representative, I have worked to help promote policies that lift up and support students and young Minnesotans alongside elected officials. I have held sessions and heard from young community members about the issues they are facing in their everyday lives, and brought those perspectives into the halls of the legislature. I have been able to organize and stand up with other young people in order to fight against the most pressing issues, like last year when alongside other MYC representatives throughout the year thousands of students showed up to fight against the climate crisis. However, throughout this time, due to the lack of funding, the work of the youth council, and my role representing my district has been strongly disrupted.

When I was first chosen to be a youth council representative I was ecstatic. Not only was I excited about what I could achieve and how I could represent the young people in my district, which as I have noted has been crucial to my time on the council. I was excited to have the opportunity to be in a place where youth voice mattered. In my time as a high schooler, it often felt like the voice of young people were brushed aside. That in order to get anything done, we couldn't just approach adults, we had to physically disrupt their spaces. Instead of expecting adults and people in power to listen, I had learned that we had to force them. When I heard about the youth council, my perspective changed, here was a body that was legislatively mandated to represent the voices of young people. It felt like this was the avenue to ensure representation for those who couldn't vote. It felt like we could finally have power in these important spaces.

While the youth council has provided many of these opportunities, I was quickly confronted by the fact that even in a space that has been uniquely carved out for young people, a space in which youth voice was written into law to be heard and accepted in the legislative process, we were still at a disadvantage. Simply, we do not have the resources to fully accomplish the duties laid out in the bill that established the council. Even worse, however, is that we are the only select advisory council established in the legislature that is not funded. When the youth council bill was passed in 2013, we lifted the state of Minnesota up, finally recognizing the importance of the perspectives of young people. However, actions speak louder than words, by choosing specifically not to fund the youth council, it represents the fact the youth voice is still not a fixture or a priority inside the legislature.

Our representatives have worked constantly, with limited resources, to try and represent the young people of our district in the best way possible. The work that we do is crucial, we are stewards and representatives of our communities, making sure that the issues that address young people are recognized. Not only are we here for our communities, we are here for all of you. As elected officials, we know that you can't understand every perspective in your districts, that's why our body was created. Our job is to assist you in making the best decisions, making sure you understand what is affecting everyone in your

district. By choosing not to fund us a council, it sends the message that these voices and these perspectives don't matter.

Minnesota is a leader when it comes to youth voice by simply recognizing us as a council, but let's not just settle for recognition. Let's actively work to ensure that young people are a force inside this legislature, provide us representatives with an opportunity to truly represent our community and we will return it by making sure you are the best legislators possible. Stand with the young people of Minnesota and vote yes of HF 1314.

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Sage Hartman

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Minnesota Youth Council Representative

City of Residence: Plymouth

My name is Sage Hartman. I'm currently a freshman at Wayzata High School and live in Congressional District 3. This year is my first year on the Minnesota Youth Council (MYC) and I am a part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee. I am in support of HF 1314 which is the MYC Funding Bill (2021-2022) because the MYC is an important way for youth to create change within Minnesota and grow as leaders.

The Minnesota Youth Council's Purpose is to give a voice to the youth of today from all backgrounds. The MYC envisions Minnesota as a state where decisions that impact the youth of today are made with and by the youth. According to Minnesota Alliance with Youth, "The MYC is also a platform from which youth representatives amplify the voice and power of their peers across the state of Minnesota in order to make change." (<https://mnyouth.net/myc/>). The Minnesota Youth Council has a very diverse and inclusive nature which allows members to open up and share experiences. Having a diverse and inclusive nature also allows a safe environment to create change and learn from each other.

The impact that the Minnesota Youth Council has made for youth across Minnesota is incredible. One example of something the MYC did that had a positive impact on many people is the Youth Voice Service Grants funded by the Youth Service America and the Graves Foundation. According to Minnesota alliance with youth, "The Service Grant program provides young people in Minnesota an opportunity to showcase their ongoing youth-led advocacy and organizing efforts by using the grant money to make a difference within their community and Minnesota as a whole" (<https://mnyouth.net/myc/projects/>). Another example of something the Minnesota Youth Council did is the 9/11 Call to Action ToolKit. This ToolKit guides you through steps that will help you figure out and identify an issue important to you and your community. Which helps create a meaningful impact within the state of Minnesota.

The MYC also has many positive impacts on Minnesota through the work with community partners. Some community partners are Escape the Vape, Youth UBI also known as unemployment benefits for students, the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota, MNCASA + the Comprehensive Sex Education Coalition, and many more! We work with these partners to make change and to form a better tomorrow.

My role on the Minnesota Youth Council is to make changes within Minnesota. I do this by being a part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Subcommittee. While being a part of this subcommittee one thing I've realized is how common mental health conditions are and how important it is that people can get the mental health support they need.

My experience with the MYC has been outstanding. I say this because there is always a welcoming and comfortable environment. It is also outstanding because everyone on the MYC is passionate about making change and we can all bond over that common goal. I've grown a lot this year by being on the MYC. One example of this growth is before I joined I didn't know about some really important things going on in Minnesota, but now I do, and I'm constantly working towards making change on those things. Another example of growth while being on the MYC is by listening to others and hearing them share their experiences with current issues.

I support HF 1314 for MYC Funding Bill (2021-2022) because the MYC is an important way for youth to create change within Minnesota and grow as leaders. The MYC is an important avenue for youth voices to make an impact today and in the future. Please support HF 1314, Thank you!

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 03/04/2021, Bill # HF1317

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Trinity Hanif

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Minnesota Youth Council Representative

City of Residence: Otsego

My name is Trinity Hanif, and I am a Junior at St. Michael-Albertville High School. For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to make a difference in my community. I was looking for ways to get involved and promote equity. However, it was hard to find opportunities for young people, so I created my own. I started a Women's Advocacy Group at my school. We work towards comprehensive sex education, access to free sanitary products, and equality for women and people of color in our community. We organized a sit-in against police brutality, made menstrual kits for those in need during quarantine, and secured a grant to put a tampon/pad dispenser in our school. Our group does amazing work, but I wanted to expand my advocacy to the state of Minnesota as a whole. That is when I found the MYC and decided to apply.

The past several months have been transformative. I have learned how to effectively advocate politically and through grassroots mobilization. I've been given opportunities that, before, would have seemed impossible. I am connected to government agencies and organizations that genuinely want to hear my voice. I finally have a seat at the table. Everything that I have learned has made me a better leader and activist. Being on this council has allowed me to help other young people find their voice. For example, I gave the members of my club and AP Gov class the opportunity to produce written testimony on bills of their interest. The MYC's work to make young folk more powerful has a ripple effect on communities across the state.

I wish everyone could have access to this opportunity, but the unfortunate reality is some students have to get a job. MYC is an unpaid opportunity and not everyone can afford to spend time on this. Some young people need to help support their families or start saving money for college. They have to pick between pursuing their interests and making money, and they often sacrifice this opportunity for the latter. If the council was able to compensate students for their time, it would open doors for others to join. We

should make this opportunity as accessible as possible, and providing compensation is the best way to do so. We need more folks at the table. Right now there is a financial barrier, and HF 1314 would shatter it. Thus, I implore you to pass and empower young Minnesotans.



✉ Info@youthprise.org ☎ 612 564 4858

March 4, 2021

Written Testimony of Youthprise President Wokie Weah in Support of
Funding for the Minnesota Youth Council in HF 1314

Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

Youthprise is pleased to support funding for the Minnesota Youth Council contained in HF 1314. The Minnesota Youth Council is a critical group of youth leaders who mobilize their fellow middle and high school students across the state to create equitable systems through youth led outreach, education, and advocacy.

As a statewide organization with a mission of increasing equity with and for Minnesota's indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth, involving youth voice in policy making and taking their policy recommendations into consideration is integral to Youthprise's mission. This is why Youthprise supports an annual appropriation to the Minnesota Alliance With Youth to fund the operations of the Minnesota Youth Council. For young people to be adequately represented in political institutions, processes, and decision-making, they must be given the necessary knowledge and capacity to participate in a meaningful way at all levels. The Minnesota Youth Council helps ensure this happens.

At Youthprise, we created our policy agenda, *A New Generation of Equity*, through an inclusive and collaborative process designed to meet the needs of all youth across Minnesota. We hosted youth-facilitated listening sessions/focus groups centered on the question "What changes do you want to see?" Most of our young people expressed a need for a platform from which they could amplify their voice and the power of their peers across Minnesota. As a result, we made increasing youth engagement within policymaking bodies one of our top priorities in our *New Generation of Equity* agenda.

The Minnesota Youth Council gives our young people a meaningful role in the policy and decision-making process. Through this council, our young people of all ages have found their voice through advocacy and community leadership, so we urge you to support HF 1314.