

Elections Finance and Policy Committee

Chair Mike Freiberg

March 15th, 2023

HF 2746 – Representative Hicks

Dear Chair Freiberg and members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability supports HF 2746 and we urge members of this committee to do the same.

As we all know, the right to vote is one of the most fundamental rights we have as Americans. It's how we express our opinions, values, and beliefs, and how we participate in shaping the future of our communities, our state, and our country. However, for many people with disabilities, exercising this right can be difficult, if not impossible, due to a wide range of barriers that they face.

Some of these barriers are physical in nature. For example, many polling places have narrow doorways, steep staircases, or other physical obstacles that can make it difficult or impossible for people with mobility disabilities to enter or navigate the space. This can be especially challenging for people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids, who may not be able to access the voting booths or other essential features of the polling place.

Other barriers are communication related. For example, people with hearing or speech disabilities may have difficulty understanding the voting process or communicating their choices effectively. This can be particularly problematic if election officials or volunteers are not trained to communicate effectively with people who have these disabilities, or if assistive technologies like sign language interpreters or audio voting machines are not available or functioning properly.

These barriers not only make it more difficult for people with disabilities to vote, they also send a message that disabled votes don't matter. This is unacceptable, and it's time for all of us to take action to ensure that every citizen can participate fully in our democracy.

We can make our democracy more inclusive and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to make their votes count. We can send a message to people with disabilities that their opinions and their votes matter, and that we value their contributions to our democracy. And we can set an example for other states and communities around the country, showing them what can be achieved when we work together to promote accessibility, inclusion, and equity for all.

The Minnesota Council on Disability thanks Representative Hicks for carrying this bill and we urge members of this committee to prioritize accessibility at voter polling places in Minnesota by supporting HF 2746.

Sincerely,



Trevor Turner

Public Policy Director