

May 5, 2024

Dear Chair Carlson, Chair Freiberg and Members of the Elections Policy Conference Committee:

Jewish Community Action is the Jewish voice in Minnesota's movement for economic, racial and social justice. We organize in solidarity with other marginalized communities in Minnesota through state and local coalitions, interfaith initiatives, and local neighborhood groups. This work is done in commitment to a shared future, where all voices are heard and respected equally.

We write to express our support for two key provisions under consideration in the Elections Policy conference committee - increased voting access on college campuses (House Language - lines 22.7 - 22.12) and the Minnesota Voting Rights Act (House Language - lines 4.18 - 13.5). Both of these measures are essential to protect, strengthen, and expand our state's democracy.

Minnesotans are eager to take on a leading role in our democracy – but we know that not everyone has equal access to the polls.

Students and younger demographics often face particular challenges in accessing the ballot, from lack of transportation to inflexible work and class schedules. Post-secondary students face the unique challenge of being first-time voters, often in a location that they are unfamiliar with: a new college campus. Allowing for additional polling places on post-secondary campuses reduces many of these barriers and ensures that young Minnesotan voices are heard in our elections.

Similarly, significant racial inequities exist in Minnesota in voter participation. The Minnesota Voting Rights Act (MNVRA) provides voters with the necessary tools to challenge discriminatory voting policies, such as inaccessible polling locations or inadequate language access at the polls. The MNVRA restores and strengthens essential protections against vote suppression that were lost due to a recent federal court decision. By allowing voters to challenge discriminatory voting policies and practices, the MNVRA empowers communities to assert their rights and participate fully in our democracy.

Jewish Community Action strongly supports both of these provisions and urges members of the Conference Committee to include them in the final Conference Committee report.

Thank you,

Beth Gendler

Executive Director, Jewish Community Action