

February 26, 2023

Dear Chair and Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee,

My name is Ellen Saliars and I live in Hopkins. I'm a public health professional who works in health equity, currently with immigrant and refugee communities. I deeply believe that our communities and health are improved by a strong, inclusive democracy. The best way to protect our democracy is to expand it. We have a real opportunity to improve the health of our state by ensuring our democracy is inclusive of all Minnesotans. I urge you to support the Democracy for the People Act (HF3/SF3) this legislative session.

When we as Minnesotans are healthier and more connected to our neighbors, our voices are stronger and our institutions more accountable. Research from the Health & Democracy Index found that communities with high voter participation enjoy greater social cohesion and better health. States that make elections more accessible through policies like automatic and same day registration, non-strict voter ID requirements, felon re-enfranchisement and mail voting options enjoy higher levels of voter participation and better public health outcomes. While Minnesota is currently ranked as the 15th easiest state to cast a ballot, there is clearly room for improvement through adoption of policies like The Democracy for the People Act (HF3/SF3) to protect and expand access to democracy and ensure the voices of all Minnesotans matter.

In the past few elections, I have engaged in letter writing campaigns to encourage fellow Minnesotans to vote. Here's a picture of my toddler, he helped me put stamps on and mail them. Even though he's only almost three years old, I wanted him to know that part of being a good member of our community is to do what we can to help everyone be part of it. There are many barriers to people engaging in our democracy, we should be doing all that we can to make it easier for people to authentically have a say in their government.



That is why I support the Democracy for the People Act, as it begins to make the promise of democracy real for us all. This is a make or break moment for our democracy and what we do now in Minnesota matters.

Sincerely,
Ellen Saliars, MPH