

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

The Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) writes in strong support of the Elections Policy Omnibus bill, emphasizing **the progressive provisions on increased language access at the polls**. CAAL is grounded in values of unity, relationship-building, and inclusive democracy. We advocate for the empowerment of all members of our community, while amplifying the voices of those most impacted, and fostering solidarity across communities for collective prosperity.

We want to express our excitement within the Asian Minnesotan community regarding the provision of interpreters and more comprehensible written materials at polling locations that is part of the Elections Policy Omnibus this session. In past election cycles, the complex language and technical jargon in written election materials presented significant barriers for first-generation voters, especially Hmong voters who practice a more oral language, hindering their understanding of their rights and the voting process. This obstacle led to hesitancy among community members to exercise their voting rights, unintentionally disenfranchising themselves.

As underscored by "Minnesota Compass," a huge disparity persists in voter turnout between white and people of color communities. In the 2020 presidential election in Minnesota, while 79.9% of white individuals voted, only 65.5% of people of color participated—a concerning gap. The proposed voting language access bill is poised to narrow this divide, offering crucial support to communities in exercising their fundamental right to vote.

The establishment of an effective public notice system disseminating important information about policy improvements to our communities could not be more influential. While the language access provisions proposed are a vital opportunity to enhance voter turnout, their impact will be limited if awareness about them is not effectively communicated. CAAL is grateful for and supports the legislation in both the Senate and House language that makes public information relating to where interpreters will be in advance of election day.

CAAL calls on members of this Conference Committee to consider the profound impact of voting language access on the inclusivity and integrity of our democratic system. By prioritizing language access and implementing an effective public notice system, we can uphold the principles of democracy and ensure that every voice is heard in our elections.

We urge members of the Elections Conference Committee to support this omnibus legislation and ensure that its language access provisions are included in the final Conference Committee Report.

Sincerely,
ThaoMee Xiong, Executive and Network Director
Coalition of Asian American Leaders