

February 26, 2023

Dear Chair and Members of the Minnesota House Human Service Finance Committee

My name is Bridget Ayers Looby, I live in Minneapolis and am a part owner of an actively managed family farm in Central Minnesota. I am a landscape architect and have worked to design and promote healthy and equitable spaces over the course of my career. I recognize that a healthy inclusive democracy is necessary for the wellbeing and health of our communities. The best way to protect our democracy is to expand it. This session 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.**

Voting matters for health. 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. The best way to protect democracy is by expanding it.

As a landscape architect, a portion of my work involves engaging with communities to arrive upon collective solutions for public spaces. This integral part of design demonstrates democracy in action, and we could not achieve healthy, equitable spaces without this piece.

Community health and wellbeing would be considerably improved by the passage of The Democracy for the People Act (HF3/SF3) and I strongly urge the Members of the Minnesota House Human Service Finance Committee to pass this bill including the expansion of automatic voter registration because it will address historical voter registration disparities and advance health equity.

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,

Bridget Ayers Looby, PLA
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