

February 23, 2023

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

My name is Jeanne Ayers, I live in Roseville and am an owner of an actively managed family farm in Central Minnesota. I have worked in business, health care, education and governmental roles as a nurse and a public health professional. I am deeply committed to advancing health equity and protecting and promoting the health of all of our communities in our State. It is clear to me that an inclusive, robust 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.**

My personal awareness of the connections between civic participation and opportunities for healthy everyday life came through my experience growing up as a member of the 4th generation on our family farm. The entire community needed to come together through the years to make decisions about access to electricity, roads, schools, and to create strategies to manage grain marketing and cropland damage. Our community came together with our elected bodies to make the decisions and investments to create the conditions to assure everyone had an opportunity to thrive. This is the type of inclusive civic participation we need, and I want to see us foster in Minnesota.

Research demonstrates that inclusive voting policies matter for health. When we as Minnesotans are more connected to our neighbors, our voices are stronger, we are healthier and our institutions more accountable. I currently lead a coalition of public health organizations committed to strengthening civic participation through inclusive voting policies. 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. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like more information on the health impacts of inclusive voting policies. 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. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like more information on the health impacts of inclusive voting policies. The best way to protect democracy is by expanding it.

Community health and wellbeing would be considerably improved in Minnesota by the passage of The Democracy for the People Act (HF3/SF3) and I strongly urge you 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,

Jeanne

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