

Written Testimony HF9

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Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Denzel Wright. I live in Bloomington with my partner and 2-year old son. It was my first time voting this year. Previously, I never saw voting as something that was particularly important and I lacked faith in our politics. I didn't realize the power I had until I connected with the Barbershop and Black Congregation Cooperative (BBCC). I was told that if I wanted to see change, it started with the people – not just one of us, but all of us.

After I learned about exercising my power, I encouraged other people to do the same. I worked with BBCC to commit people to vote. I ran into a lot of people who felt the same way I did once: that their voice wasn't important, and that our politics had no place for them. Through the power of organizing, so many of them changed their minds and voted for the first time in a long time.

A lot was at stake this year. Issues like policing, public safety, and surviving this pandemic directly impact my daily life and the lives of my family and friends. We need to fix our democracy to make it more responsive to the people so we can have a say about the issues we care about.

Since the day I voted, I feel like I was able to have a say. I want everyone to come together to have that same feeling. We, as people, are one, regardless of our background. We need a democracy that puts our voices back at the center; one that prioritizes equity and includes *everyone* in the process.

I support passing HF9 to do that.

Thank you.