

My name is Mark Pfeifer. I have served as Director of Programs at Hmong Cultural Center in Saint Paul for 21 years. A major service we provide at Hmong Cultural Center is our Citizenship Education program which helps Hmong and other refugees and immigrants earn their U.S. Citizenship. In addition to English language Citizenship classes, Hmong Cultural Center has a special Citizenship class taught in Hmong and English to help elderly and disabled Hmong earn their U.S. Citizenship. One of the key reasons why many Hmong and other refugees and immigrants want to earn their U.S. Citizenship is so that they can vote and participate in the democratic process in our country.

The bill under discussion, HF 1585/SF 1081, will help many more refugees and immigrants who worked hard to earn their Citizenship to effectively exercise their rights as Americans and vote for their candidates of choice in Minnesota elections. The language barrier does hinder the ability of many refugees and immigrants, particularly the elderly and disabled from participating in elections in our state. The opportunity to more easily obtain information and assistance at the polls in their own language from election judges including high school students who speak their own language will help ensure greater civic participation and inclusion of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Hmong and other immigrants and refugees in the political process in Minnesota. In conclusion, I hope you will support HF 1585/SF 1081.

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