

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Chair and committee members for hearing this crucial bill today. I would like to tell you about how the Minnesota Youth Council completely changed my life. It showed me what disciplined, compassionate public service looks like at a young age and gave me the firsthand experience that ignited my passion for policy-oriented change. Young people show their devotion to their communities in many ways, and for a long time, I wasn't sure how I was going to demonstrate that. The Minnesota Youth Council provided me with the resources and experiences (that I unquestionably would not have otherwise had) I needed to understand my true purpose in this world. Through meeting with legislators, reviewing grants, and connecting with youth of various backgrounds, I fundamentally changed as a person, becoming a more compassionate leader who is completely grounded in her convictions.

The Minnesota Youth Council is different from other organizations that connect youth with government in that it places youth directly at the decision making table. MYC representatives are taught skills they don't typically learn in a classroom, such as committee etiquette, the mechanisms of an omnibus bill, and the importance of lobbying. They learn to ask shrewd and clever questions of lawmakers, who are sitting at the same table as them while presenting their bill.

The true value of the Minnesota Youth Council lies in the confidence and skills it instills into the youth representatives who are involved in the organization. The youth representatives truly care about the work they are doing because they realize the gravity of their presence in these legislative bodies. I urge you to support funding the Minnesota Youth Council, because if it is supported and nurtured now, I have no doubt that it will continue to foster the necessary leadership in our young people that will build a better and brighter future for our state and country.

- Raina Meyer, Edina