

Thank you chair and committee members for hearing this bill and taking the time to listen to voices that often go unheard.

I would like to start off by explaining a little about myself and the community I grew up in. I come from a family of immigrants who call south Minneapolis their home, and so it became mine. I speak for many inner city youth when I say that the sights we witness on a day to day basis are incomprehensible to many. I see peers that I went to school with now on the news as memories. I know youth that have been involved with the Juvenile Justice System and I have seen the impact that societal issues have on communities like mine. That is why I joined MYC.

The Minnesota Youth Council not only gave me a platform to voice my stories but it allowed me to have a direct seat at the table of systemic change. Growing up, students aren't taught about how important legislation is and how directly it affects us. MYC has informed me about the political process in Minnesota and has provided me with opportunities to support legislation that can truly bring the change that is needed in my community and beyond. Without MYC, I would not have been able to understand even slightly what policy looks like which is why this bill is needed. Youth across the state are continuously being left out of decision making and as the future of this state, it is detrimental to not have our input.

Legislating this powerful body of change-makers is essential to the voices that are silenced and it adds an opportunity for youth in Minnesota to be given that life-changing opportunity of having a seat at the table.

-Sarah Ragoonanan, Junior at Hiawatha Collegiate High School Minneapolis