

Good morning Chair Latz and committee members.

My name is Bethany Winkels and I am Executive Director of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, the Labor Movement's shared voice of more than 300,000 working people who belong to more than 1,000 local unions.

It's on behalf of those 300,000 union members and all working people, that the Minnesota AFL-CIO is proud to support Senate File 26.

By their very nature, Labor unions are democratic institutions.

Rank and file union members, no matter where they come from, what they look like, or what has happened in their past – have the right to vote on their collective bargaining agreements, local leadership, policy positions, and more.

These rights are fundamental in the Labor Movement, because any healthy democracy – be it a union, city, state, or nation – requires that anyone impacted by policy decisions has a right to vote on who should be making those decisions.

However, not every US citizen of voting age in Minnesota has the right to vote.

In fact, more than 55,000 people who have served their sentences in prison – people who live, work, and pay taxes in every part of our state – are denied the right to vote.

Minnesota has long been a leader in access to democracy.

We make sure that every eligible voter has multiple ways to cast their vote.

It's why we routinely lead the nation in both voter turnout and election integrity.

It's why it is long past time to restore the right to vote to those previously incarcerated upon release – so they can have a stake in the society they are rejoining.

By ensuring that people have their right to vote respected, no matter what they look like, what their gender, or whether they have served time, we can move forward to make this a place where democracy includes every American, with no exceptions.

Thank you for your time.