

February 19, 2024

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to create open, honest, and accountable government, more information about our work at [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org). Minnesota is home to over 18,000 statewide Common Cause MN multipartisan members and despite belonging to various MN party affiliations, or not being affiliated, the one thing they've come together to do is support our work ensuring our Republic's democracy is safeguarded, and everyone's vote counts.

**We are grateful to Sen. Mitchell for introducing SF3616 and prioritizing access to the ballot for Minnesota's young voters. However, we are disappointed that the Chief Author's amendment now limits access to the ballot for younger voters to only general elections. Key local and state elections would be exempt from the provisions of SF3616. Local and state elections have greater and more immediate impact on issues disenfranchised students care about. If there is to be greater parity in how BIPOC students and their counterparts experience democracy, we encourage Sen. Mitchell to include local and state elections currently exempt from SF3616.**

41 million Gen Zers will be eligible to vote in 2024. According to Tuft's University, "Minnesota consistently has some of the highest youth participation in the country: it has had one of the top three youth voter turnouts in the last three national elections." However, this is not the case for young voters of color and indigenous youth.

We support SF3616 and take this opportunity to spotlight the disparities in voter turnout for BIPOC young voters. It is noteworthy to highlight that given statewide underrepresentation of BIPOC students in enrollments at postsecondary campuses across Minnesota, we must continue striving for greater parity in how youth of color and other disenfranchised youth experience democracy as compared to their white counterpart.

Some key factors we consider when assessing a proposed bill's policy impact on disenfranchised Minnesotans and other impacted communities are:

- where did the proposed bill language come from,
- whether proposed policies allowed for direct and meaningful participation from impacted Minnesotans, and trusted community voices outside of the traditional stakeholders,
- whether the final bill includes the voice and experiences of impacted Minnesotans,
- whether there is inclusive and equitable representation that is meaningful among those making the decisions on what the bill proposes, and
- whether there is parity in power among those decision makers at the table creating proposed policy.

We believe that when co-creating an inclusive democracy, the "how" proposed policies come together are as important as "what" comes from the "how". Democracy is how a free society resolves its differences. And to do that well, we must all agree the process of including direct input in the solutions proposed by impacted Minnesotans is fair, produces equitable outcomes, and reflects our communities, our values, and our priorities.

Thank you for your dedication to all Minnesotans as you work in committee.

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