

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. 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. Bolton and members of the Senate Elections Committee, for your support of SF3942 providing for the creation of a public campaign finance program for local candidates.

We know that money has too much influence in our political system. We've seen the explosion of outside dark money and other special interests coming into our elections - cycle after cycle. That's why continue advocating for money in politics solutions that empower small-dollar donors to make an impact in campaigns, require disclosure of all campaign money raised and spent, remove the financial barriers stopping everyday people from running for office, and hold elected officials and wealthy special interests accountable to voters in Minnesota.

Providing for the creation of a public campaign finance program for local candidates is a major step in the direction of co-creating a more inclusive and representative democracy. One of the factors impacting who runs for office, and who does not, is access to resources to run a local campaign. **Worthington, MN has a population of almost 44% Minnesotans of Color or Indigenous Minnesotans, and Nobles County, MN's where close to 16% of the County's population are Minnesotans of Color or Indigenous Minnesotans, have zero city or county elected officials that self-identify as a member of Color or Indigenous Minnesotan.**

We support SF3942 because in part, it addresses the disparities gap in local representation for those cities and counties with established or emerging populations of disenfranchised Minnesotans. It allows for an onramp to direct participation in elections, co-creation of more inclusive democracy and greater equity in local policies outcomes for Minnesotans regardless of race/ethnicity, zip code or party affiliation.

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 are fair, produce equitable outcomes, and reflect our communities, our values, and our priorities.

democracy is **OUR** common cause

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

Annastacia Belladonna-Carrera

Annastacia Belladonna-Carrera,

Executive Director

