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March 6, 2024

Chair Jim Carlson
3221 Minnesota Senate Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Hello Chair Carlson and members of the Senate Elections Committee,

Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP), connects nonpartisan grassroots organizing efforts within our community and with coalition partners across the Twin Cities, together with community allies, to create a more just and equitable democracy. Our mission at AAOP is to empower young Asian Minnesotans to create systemic change for an equitable, conscious, and just society.

Although Minnesotans are justly proud of our overall “turnout,” Asian voters make up 3.1% of the Minnesota total voting population however we’re only voting at 1.9% meaning that there’s 1.2% of eligible Asian voters that are not voting. Asian voters are disproportionately less likely to register and vote, especially when faced with significant barriers. That is, the legislature did well in 2023 to formalize use of voter information posters and interpreters at the polls, restoring the vote to formerly incarcerated persons, and pre-registering high school students. Those laws need to be buttressed by a law designed to prevent deliberate or inadvertent discriminatory practices and policies. AAOP supports the Minnesota Voting Rights Act, because it explicitly protects our state from discriminating against voters on the basis of race or language minority status, and provides for citizen redress, at a time when some federal election protections seeking to ensure equal access have eroded.

In order to strengthen and continue to protect our democracy, we need to ensure that all voices are heard and all votes are counted. A MN Voting Rights Act will put in place the necessary protections for free, fair and accessible elections for all people in Minnesota, and especially those faced with hardship of pre-existing barriers.

AAOP strongly supports the Minnesota Voting Rights Act and urges members of the House Elections Committee to vote in favor of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Linda Lelis-Her
Executive Director
Asian American Organizing Project