

Chair Jim Carlson
3221 Minnesota Senate Bldg
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Carlson and Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

The Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) is a nonprofit organization bringing together Minnesota's Asian American community and cultivating a network of leaders from across sectors, generations, and ethnicities. CAAL envisions a state where all Minnesotans, regardless of background, are actively engaged and can achieve prosperity. We write in support of SF4729, the Senate Elections Policy Omnibus DE, and its inclusion of essential voting language access provisions.

We'd like to thank Chair Carlson and members of the committee for your leadership in passing important provisions last session on increased language access at the polls. We were able to enact new legislation requiring better access to translated materials and in-person translation in polling locations across the state. This landmark policy continues to positively impact Minnesotans of all backgrounds, including Asian Minnesotans and those speaking native languages other than English.

This session, SF4729 further strengthens language access and inclusivity in the election space. Specifically, we appreciate the proposal to require the **public posting of polling locations with on-site interpreters**. Many voters make their plans to vote depending on when and where an interpreter will be present. The law does not currently specify how voters will know which polling locations will have interpreters during what times on Election Day.

While written translated materials at the polls are valuable, having an interpreter present makes an immense and meaningful difference for several reasons. For communities speaking **oral languages**, like Hmong Minnesotans, in-person interpreters are far more helpful than written translations, which often fail to convey the full extent of the language. A recent StarTribune article¹ highlights some of the shortcomings of English-to-Hmong written translation. In addition to **translating critical information** for Minnesota voters and encouraging voter participation for non-English speakers, in-person interpreters also create a more **culturally welcoming environment** for those who may be overwhelmed by the voting process.

Voting is the fundamental right of every eligible Minnesotan. Providing the right language resources is key to ensuring that all citizens can cast a free and effective ballot, regardless of their native language. We thank Chair Carlson for his leadership on SF4729 and the provisions that would make clear the resources available for voters in advance. We urge members of the Senate Elections committee to vote in favor of this accessible, inclusive measure.

Best,

ThaoMee Xiong
Executive Director, CAAL

¹ Gustav DeMars, "[Human Services Department comes under fire for poor Hmong translation](#)". StarTribune, March 16, 2024.