

Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Aaimah Khawaja, a student at Lakeville North High School and a passionate representative of Congressional District 2 on the Minnesota Youth Council. Within our 36-member council, we bear the responsibility of bridging the gap between the vibrant voices of 1,317,461 young minds in our state and the corridors of power occupied by policymakers and the Governor.

A significant barrier we face in being able to make contact with the young people we are obligated to represent is a scarcity of funding for crucial outreach events necessary to allow Minnesota's young populace to actively participate in the political landscape. It's one thing to allocate a group of young people to serve as representatives for Minnesota's youth, but another to actually equip us with the funding needed to adequately fulfill our roles. Young people are the future, but we are also the present. Our voices and stories matter now and the more you invest in youth voices, the greater you guarantee a future of competent and successful leaders.

Minnesota can lead the charge in altering the prevailing narrative that disregards the voices of the next generation. A survey by the Washington Post revealed that 7 out of 10 youth feel neglected by the decision-making processes. Let our great state be the catalyst for change, allowing youth organizations like ours to expand outreach initiatives and enhance our capacity to represent the myriad of bright young minds in Minnesota.

By allocating resources to amplify our efforts you are not merely investing in today's youth; you are forging a path towards a tomorrow where informed, engaged, and empowered leaders emerge from the very fabric of Minnesota's diverse and talented young community. Let this investment be the cornerstone of a legacy that values, supports, and cultivates the potential of our youth. I urge you all to vote in support of this bill. Thank you.