

Chari Kunesh and members of the committee

My name is Charlie Schmit, I am a Senior at Washburn High School in Minneapolis and I am currently serving my third year on the Minnesota Youth Council.

For those who don't know, the Minnesota youth council is a collection of 36 youths from across the state that work together to advocate for and pass legislation on youth issues. We are also the only legislatively mandated youth group in the country. Last year I testified numerous times on bills that were important for youth and one of those bills was passed into law.

The Minnesota youth council is a life changing experience. In your time at the Youth Council you learn how to advocate for yourself and for other youth through the legislature and how to make sure your message is heard. You get the chance to connect with people from across the state that you never would've connected with before and get the opportunity to consider and learn new perspectives pertaining to youth issues. I've worked on projects like Safe Routes to school with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, currently my committee (Education Equity) is working with the Department of Education on a Youth engagement survey that will be sent to every high schooler in the state and I've also worked with a few of you personally on your own bills and agendas. Without the Youth Council none of this would happen.

I joined the Youth Council in the beginning of my sophomore year of High School because I felt like I wanted to do something to help out youth instead of sitting and talking about all the issues I have with the way things are run. I can honestly say that The Minnesota Youth Council is the most rewarding experience of my life and has helped me better myself and my community. As someone who's been interested in politics since Freshman year (Thanks to The West Wing) I can say that the Youth Council is what truly allowed me to explore and engage in my passion, which I will be pursuing as a political science major next year. Not only does the MYC strive to make change and better the world around us, but the Council also makes changes and betters the youth, adults, and legislators that engage and participate in it.

Throughout my years of participation in Model United Nations and Youth In Government I've met Youth from across the country who strive to advocate. While all these kids strive to advocate and many of them do advocate one thing they all say to me is that they are jealous. The youth in this nation are jealous of the Youth Council this state has mandated to exist. The Youth Council is the crown jewel of Youth engagement in Minnesota, and without it we lose this era of promoting and encouraging youth engagement.

I am here today to make sure that young people across the state can have the same experience as me for many years to come. I am here because without this bill the youth council will eventually dissolve and youth voice will go back to getting discarded and ignored. I'm here to set a precedent for other states that youth voice does matter and we have something important to say.

I implore you to vote yes on this bill today, not just for me, but for future youth to come. Thank you for your time.