

March 25, 2024

Chair Ron Latz
3105 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Latz and members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

Jewish Community Action (JCA) is the Jewish voice in Minnesota's movement for economic, racial, and social justice. We organize in solidarity with marginalized communities in Minnesota through state and local coalitions, interfaith initiatives, and local neighborhood groups. This work is done in commitment to a shared future, where all voices are heard and respected equally. We believe that our democracy functions at its best when it is expanded to include a diverse set of opinions.

JCA writes in support of SF3994, the Minnesota Voting Rights Act. This bill adds Minnesota to a growing list of states acting to protect the right and freedom to vote for all citizens, especially those facing discriminatory policies and unfair barriers to voting. In 1965, the U.S. Congress passed the Federal Voting Rights Act, a landmark legislation prohibiting racial discrimination in voting. Since then, several court decisions have weakened these protective laws, most notably a ruling by the federal Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in November 2023 removing the right of voters and their organizations to sue under Section 2 of the federal VRA. This court has jurisdiction over Minnesota, among other states, making the ruling directly and negatively impactful on our voters across the state.

SF3994 safeguards our democracy from barriers such as unfairly drawn districts weakening the Black and Brown vote, insufficient language access for immigrant voters with a native language other than English, and voter intimidation throughout polling locations. The bill addresses vote denial and dilution and allows private citizens and civil rights groups to sue against discriminatory voting policies. By strengthening the freedom to vote, we allow more people to share their ideas for improving their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

At Jewish Community Action, we endeavor to create an inclusive, equitable, multi-racial democracy. The Minnesota Voting Rights Act is an important tool that can get us one step closer by ensuring that all voters, especially Black voters and voters of color, can fully and fairly participate in our elections.

We call upon members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee to pass this critical legislation.

Beth Gendler
Executive Director, Jewish Community Action