



January 29, 2025

Chair Lucero, Chair Port, and members of the housing and homelessness prevention committee;

I am writing today in opposition to SF 222. Minnesota Youth Collective was founded seven years ago, because we recognized a disconnect in how young people were treated in spaces of power and in electoral politics. Historically, young people have been an afterthought and only engaged with when something is on the line. Young people, ages 18-35, are the largest voting bloc in the state, however we have the least representation in traditional spaces of power or decision making spaces. We seek to change that, and work hard to advocate for policies that impact young people. We work year round to give young people the tools, knowledge, and confidence to take up space and build a representational democracy, here in our communities.

Over the past few years, alongside community partners in the Equity in Place coalition, we passed the Tenant Right to Organize, a bill that uplifted and protected renters in Minnesota and went into effect January 1 of this year. That bill, as passed and enacted into law, allows renters to meet and form tenant unions, without fear of retaliation. It also allows tenant organizers, hired and trained by organizations, to be invited in and support tenants throughout the process.

SF222 seeks to undo some of those protections. Requiring non-resident organizers to submit additional background checks and compensate the landlord, creates a huge disadvantage for renters. Non-resident tenant organizers are critical resources for many renters and especially young people who are often first time renters. Tenants having the ability to invite trusted organizers in to support them in understanding changes to leases, communicating with landlords, as well as their neighbors is necessary. Non-resident organizers have the ability to build relationships, based on shared geography, interests, language spoken, and more. Folks in these roles are invited into conversations because of the knowledge they hold, in navigating housing policy and legalese, but they do so much more to build community, and empower tenants to advocate for themselves and their loved ones. This proposed change in legislation will add yet another barrier to renters. This language specifically targets organizers. Apartment buildings have people in and out of them every day who are not subjected to background checks, such as maintenance staff and delivery folks. Tenants deserve to be able to invite trusted community members into their homes, regardless of what that conversation is about, without that individual having to pay a fee.

We urge you to vote no on SF 222. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Natalie Somerson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Natalie Somerson
Political Director | Minnesota Youth Collective