Good morning.  My name is Joan Gustafson, External Affairs Officer with the Michigan Nonprofit Association.

Founded in 1990, MNA is a 501(c)(3) statewide membership organization that serves a large and diverse nonprofit sector through advocacy, services, and resources. Before the pandemic, there were approximately 50,000 nonprofits in Michigan that employed more than 470,000 people, about 10% of the workforce. So, while people think of nonprofits for their human and community benefits, we’re much more of an economic driver than people realize. Our mission is to strengthen the collective voice, leadership, and capacity of nonprofits to enrich the lives of all Michiganders.

Thank you, Chairman Singh and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bills 958 through 961.

Michigan’s population, like most of the nation, is more diverse than ever. However, lack of standards for data collection on race and ethnicity obscures the reality of Michigan’s population and overlooks many demographic groups. The result is many communities are excluded from the benefits of programs specially designed to address their unique challenges. The lack of accurate data has led to disparities in healthcare access, public school transportation, housing, and more.

This has had an enormous negative impact on our communities **and the nonprofits that serve them.**

Without disaggregated data, nonprofits bear a huge financial burden to raise funds for private studies to inform their programming for the communities they serve. In addition to being expensive, these studies usually are not as comprehensive or conclusive as state data would be.

Disaggregated data is like a magnifying glass. It allows us to see beyond averages and recognize the nuances that aggregated data might miss. By understanding these nuances, nonprofits would better understand and identify the socioeconomic and healthcare needs in their communities and create more effective programs and interventions.

Despite many minority groups’ experience of differing health outcomes and unique social determinants of health, there is no data on many of these populations in the state. As such, they are excluded from consideration in programs designed to eliminate health disparities and address poor health outcomes among their groups.

The current lack of details in state data means certain nonprofits end up missing out on funding for data-based programs.

For example, the Arab American Heritage Council, the nonprofit who you heard from earlier, sought to develop a vaccine education and distribution program during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, because the Council was not considered an organization that services a minority population, the federal funding that was earmarked for organizations serving minority communities was not accessible.

Detailed data collection will allow nonprofit organizations to make data-driven decisions that inform their work. When communities are no longer invisible, nonprofits will be able to expand their impact.

Michigan Nonprofit Association joins our partners in asking that you pass these important bills to produce meaningful data disaggregation at the state level that will improve the lives of all of us.

Thank you.