



June 15, 2020

Dear Honorable Chair Youakim and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

The tragic events that have taken place over the past several weeks, on top of the surge of COVID-19 across the state, have once again highlighted the racial disparities resulting in marginalizing and disenfranchising black and brown communities. It is in this context that we write to express strong and urgent support for HF36 as these critical policy proposals are bold steps in the right direction to legitimately addressing the state's persistent achievement and opportunity gaps.

This policy proposal includes a state goal to increase our teaching workforce each year by two percentage points, so that by 2040 there is parity between the demographics of students in the classroom with the licensed staffing profile. Additionally, district would be required to have plans to ensure that curriculum as well as learning and work environments are inclusive and respectful of all racial and ethnic groups. Both of these provisions have been top priorities for MCLA since 2017 through the Increase Teachers of Color Act.

Additionally, it is critical to note that our advocacy around this legislation is grounded in data. MCLA conducted a survey last month, at the recommendation of Commissioner Ricker, of Latino parents in order to enhance our understanding of their family's experience with distance learning. First, the data and sentiment clear demonstrate that Minnesota's Latino community is reeling economically and emotionally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, parents noted that the social and emotional well-being of students is of concern and current limited access to mental health services makes it imperative to emphasize social and emotional learning as we move forward. When asked to measure their child's emotional well-being, approximately 30% of respondents consider their child to be poor/sad or very poor/sad during the distance learning. Less than half (48%) indicated that their child always has access to the behavioral/mental health services they need/might need, while 30% of respondents indicated that their child never has access to the behavioral/mental health services they need/might need.

Moreover, as a result of our collected data and continued conversations with diverse stakeholders in our community throughout the state, we firmly believe the time to act is now. Students of color cannot wait any longer for historical and systemic barriers to be addressed in order for them to receive a high quality, equitable education.

Now is the time to show true commitment to addressing the states gaps and do right by all students as they deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented and historic period for our state and nation.

Sincerely,

Rosa Tock | Executive Director

Samantha Diaz | Legislative and Policy Director