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March 27,2023

Attention:

Chair: Rep. Tina Liebling

Committee Administrator: Josh Sande

Regarding: HF2930

The Cultural Wellness Center is in full support of passing the Bill HF2930, the establishment of an Office of African American Health, dedicated to improving population health outcomes for African Americans in Minnesota, and Advancing Equity through Capacity Building and Resource Allocation.

MDH has increasingly recognized the unique issues and needs of multigenerational African American Minnesotans arising from cumulative and persistent disadvantages in housing, educational achievement, employment, and poverty. The improvement of African American health and wellbeing, MDH must address upstream factors that disproportionately impact US-born Black Minnesotans by building new multisectoral partnerships to identify and develop feasible strategies to interrupt the complex, intersecting pathways that contribute to downstream health outcomes.

The proposal establishes an Office of African American Health to address the root causes of health inequities that disproportionately impact Minnesota's African American communities. The Office of African American Health will allow MDH to build upon existing health equity efforts by identifying and targeting multiple factors that negatively impact health outcomes of Minnesota's African American children and families and by developing unique solutions that can achieve sustainable improvements in health outcomes.

The advancing equity through capacity building and resource allocation proposal awards competitive grants annually to provide capacity building opportunities for community-based organizations (CBO's).

***We unleash the power of people to heal themselves and build community.***

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The grants aim to increase the technical capacities of small CBOs and their ability to procure grants and contracts. This proposal also improves MDH's ability to partner with CBOs more effectively by ensuring that internal grantmaking and procurement policies and practices prioritize equity, transparency, and accessibility.

A study shows that less than 7% of grant money went toward funding racial or ethnic minorities, even though those same populations make up over 40% of the U.S. population. The same study found that only 6% of grant dollars went to people with disabilities and less than half a percent of grant dollars went towards LGBTQ communities. MDH and the Governor's Office continue to hear from community leaders, including a 2019 letter from leaders in Minnesota's urban American Indian community, that the state's grantmaking and procurement processes require significant improvements to truly serve all Minnesotans equitably. Ensuring access to state resources and funding by communities most impacted by inequities requires changing the internal grantmaking and procurement policies and helping CBOs better equipped and prepared for success in procuring grants and contracts to maximize the impact of the state dollar in reducing inequities.

This program would ensure the state funds efforts that advance equitable, inclusive, and effective programs. It would also contribute to a more equitable and inclusive community engagement approach to public health decisions. Providing more equitable resources would directly improve the lives and health outcomes of children and families most impacted by inequities.

I look forward to this Bill HF2930 being passed.

Sincerely,

*Roberta Barnes*

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