

March 31, 2023

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Capital Investment Committee,

Unidos Minnesota is an immigrant-led, state-wide organization building power for Minnesota working families to advance social, racial, and economic justice. We are an organization born out of the immigration justice movement. Immigration, education, healthcare, and climate justice are at the core of our work. We are accountable to a base of mixed-status families, many of whom are essential workers who kept the state running while most of us sheltered at home. We write to you in support of HF 3077 Tending the Soil's Rise Up Center proposal for the Fiscal Year 2024 Community Project Funding Request.

Our constituency is composed of essential workers and frontline communities, whose voices are critical to shaping the green energy transition. Moreover, the impact of a truly equitable policy must prioritize these communities. The Rise Up Center is of vital importance because it will provide worker-designed apprenticeship programs that create pathways to good jobs and stable careers that benefit individual workers, their communities, as well as the market's demand for skilled labor in green industries. Furthermore, this investment is critical for our state, as 85 percent of energy efficiency employers in Minnesota report difficulty hiring workers.¹

Throughout history, low wage workers, BIPOC communities and New Americans have been excluded from big shifts in our market economy, leaving local communities in states of precarity and distress. Racial inequities now exacerbated under a climate crisis and a post-pandemic recovery continue to overburden frontline communities. Hence, HF 3077, Tending the Soil's Rise Up Center proposal, is of critical importance, because while our state prepares for a once-in-a-generation transition away from fossil fuels, this language creates an opportunity to ensure that the most underserved workers are empowered to provide solutions and contributions to our renewable future.

For Minnesota, a just green transition presents a historic opportunity to disrupt cycles of occupational segregation by giving the most vulnerable access to career paths. The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that environmental health, climate change, and worker safety & protections are inextricably intertwined. Yet, one disastrous compounded effect of this reality was the exacerbation of racial inequity due to the occupational segregation of Black and Latino workers in low-wage jobs. For instance, the Latino community is severely underrepresented in occupations such as utility work, where Latinos comprise only 1.2% of the workforce. HF 3077, Tending the Soil's Rise Up Center request, will build a pathway for workers of color to access and succeed in industries where they are significantly underrepresented, such as the utilities.

This legislative session presents a historic opportunity to place the prosperity and the well-being of all Minnesotans front and center, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, immigration status, dis/ability, and gender identity. Moreover, the workers that kept the state running through the COVID-19 pandemic while most of us sheltered at home, deserve to be included in the design of a green transition meant to uplift all Minnesotans. Thank you for your support and consideration of HF 3077, Tending the Soil's Rise Up Center request.

Should you have any questions, please contact me or our Policy Director, Sara Lopez. Sara can be reached by email at sara@unidos-mn.org or by phone at (507) 581-4211.

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ Center for Energy and Environment, 2019.