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January 10, 2023

Representative Ruth Richardson

403 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN. 55155

Dear Representative Richardson and to all it may concern,

I am writing this letter in strong support of HF 55 which would create an office for missing and murdered black women and girls.

I have worked with youth experiencing homelessness and those who have been victims of sex trafficking for over 20 years with the last 10 of them at The Link. The Link is a nonprofit based in north Minneapolis that provides a continuum of services, street outreach, emergency shelter and housing for youth and young families who are experiencing homelessness, have been victims of sex trafficking and/or who are involved in the juvenile justice or foster care system.

I / we see black girls and young women who are being victimized by violence – domestic violence, sex trafficking, gun violence and murder on a daily basis. We also see many black girls and young women that “go missing” and there is often times no response to actively go and look for them. There are so many examples but one example that comes to mind is a 16 year old black girl who was living in our housing program for sex trafficking victims (Passageways Housing Program) who’s sex trafficker had kidnapped her toddler daughter in retaliation for trying to escape from being trafficked. Although she had filed a police report and knew who had kidnapped her daughter there was no response and in general not a big concern for this young black girls safety or well being. The Link did get involved and advocated with the young person and eventually law enforcement did open a case and start actively looking for her, thankfully she was found. This is not always the case. We are losing far too many of our black girls and women.

The statistics also reinforce what we are seeing within The Link and our community. In the United States it is estimated that between 64-75,000 black girls and women go missing and that their cases stay open four times longer than other women’s. In Minnesota, black women are three times more likely to die of homicide than their white peers and make up 40% of domestic violence victims (while they make up 7% of the population within the state).

A first step in the right direction would be to create an office for missing and murdered black women and girls that could create the much needed attention and focus this crisis needs and work to resolve and prevent the violence and murder of black girls and women in our state.

Thank you for your consideration and support. If you have any questions I can be reached at [bholger@thelinkmn.org](mailto:bholger@thelinkmn.org) or 612-636-4260.

Sincerely,

Beth Holger, CEO

