

February 18, 2024

Chair Laurie Pryor
Minnesota House Education Policy Committee
571 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Driver Education Program Access Expanded for Low-Income Students (HF3360/Clardy)

Chair Pryor and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage and East Metro Civic Alliance write in support of HF3360, the proposal to expand low-income student access to driver education programs.

Correlations between driver's education and household income illustrate the ways achievement gaps are rooted in opportunity gaps. Studies show that teens from wealthy homes are 51 percent more likely to have a license than low-income teens¹. While all households recognize that driving is costly, low-income households are overwhelmed by the costs. In a recent survey, 33 percent of parents making less than \$50k per year say driving expenses prevented their teen from getting licensed. No parent making \$100k or more, who responded to that survey, identified cost as a reason their teen didn't drive.

HF3360 addresses the preceding socioeconomic divide by establishing driver education grants to cover a portion of the costs for a student who qualifies for a free or reduced-price meal. To the extent the grants reduce the financial burdens on low-income household, the bill will help expand driver's license access for Minnesotans in African Heritage communities. In Minnesota as elsewhere, the impacts of poverty on children and students are deeply racialized. Federal and state data indicate that, while less than 10 percent of non-Hispanic White children experience poverty, 25 percent of Black children live in poor households². The disaggregated data shows even greater inequality. The poverty rate is 57 percent for children from Somali Minnesotan households, 39 percent for children from Ethiopian Minnesotan households, and 32 percent for children from U.S.-born African American families in Minnesota³.

Access to driver's education can increase one's prospects for enjoying health and wellness, public safety, and upward labor mobility. For many, licensed driving means greater access to better quality job,

¹ The Zebra "[Study: The cost of teen driving hits low-income families hardest](#)" (March 30, 2023); Pacific Standard "[Driver's Ed Is Becoming Harder for Poor Kids to Afford](#)" (January 16, 2018).

² Susan Brower et al [The Economic Status of Minnesotans 2023](#) (March 2023, MN State Demographic Center).

³ Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota [Minnesota Kids Count 2020: Building Bridges to Economic Stability for Children and Families](#) (November 2020); MinnPost "[A report ranks Minnesota third for child well-being, but there are big gaps between white children and children of color](#)" (June 24, 2021).

housing, health care, education, and food resources. The Minnesota economy is best served when our state invests in measures that expand these resource opportunities. HF3360 is a step in this direction. We thank Rep. Clardy for bringing this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Theodore Rose | Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

Eric Clark | Board Chair
East Metro Civic Alliance





Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys Endorses

HF 3360

February 19, 2024

Committee Members:

Girl Scouts River Valleys is the local council of Girl Scouts of the USA, a registered 501(c)3 organization and the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. Girl Scouts aims to offer every girl a chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success. Girl Scouts River Valleys serves over 29,000 members in southern Minnesota, western Wisconsin, and one county in Iowa.

Girl Scouts River Valleys is writing today in support of HF 3360 which will expand access to driver education programs around Minnesota through grants to school districts that benefit students and the establishment of a workgroup to address access to driver education programs.

Minnesota requires 30 hours of driver education for those under 18 and courses can cost \$400. This can be a costly barrier for many students, including many of our members. Driving is one of the first steps towards independence for many and a necessary step for those with jobs, those living in rural areas and communities that lack reliable public transportation. In a recent survey by a sister Girl Scout council in Minnesota, 37 percent of program participants said transportation was a barrier to them participating in after school activities.

This bill will allow many more students to take advantage of in-school driver education courses and with it, participate more fully in their communities.

We ask that that you support HF 3360. We would be happy to further discuss with any of you the details of our support for this issue, please feel free to reach out at any time to our Director of Advocacy and Community Relations at advocacy@girlscoutsrv.org.

Thank you for your service on this committee and your attention to this bill.

Marisa C. Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Girl Scouts River Valleys

Mission: building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

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