

March 19th, 2023

Dear members of the House Education Finance Committee:

As concerned parents of a third-grade student attending Carver Elementary in 112 school district, my wife, Sarah Gilson, and I, Mark Gilson, are writing to provide feedback on HF1269. First I would like to applaud you all for your hard work and dedication to our public school system. My mother was a public school teacher for 40 years, spending her career as a special education and reading teacher, so I am aware of the complexity and challenges of K-12 education, and believe in the public school system as a means to provide our children with the knowledge and tools required to excel in the globally connected world we live in.

Our concerns with HF1269 are covered in detail below, but can be largely attributed to ideological language, race essentialism, and illiberal policies. We believe that all people in Minnesota should receive equally immersive and challenging instruction regardless of their race or background. We also strongly believe that teachers of all colors and backgrounds are capable of this instruction, and that there is no need to enact racial quotas to ensure this.

My wife and I both work in fields where there is a wide range of cultural and racial backgrounds, and it is with the bedrock of shared values and goals that allow the teams we work with to learn, grow, and excel. We believe in diversity; it is a strength. What we have concerns with is interweaving race and identity into legislation instead of placing focus on academics and enabling both students and teachers to strive for excellence, regardless of their race or background.

One final plea is that you all understand the true necessity of balance in the legislature. It supersedes enacting political agendas, supports long term growth for the State, and ensures taxpayers are consistently and equally represented. Balance forces debate, discussion, equal representation, level headedness, and accountability. We appreciate your dedication to the work you do and hope that you can continue to make Minnesota a great place to raise and educate children.

Sincerely,

Mark and Sarah Gilson

## HF1269 Details:

### *Article 6 Sec. 1.*

*(h) "Institutional racism" means structures, policies, and practices within and across institutions that produce outcomes that **chronically favor white people** and disadvantage those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.*

### **Feedback:**

**Although the intent, I'm sure, is well meaning, dividing our educational system in Minnesota with race essentialism using ideological language will cause more harm than good. It is important students see each other as peers through the lense of shared values and the common goal of academic excellence, and not through the lense of race.**

## **Article 6 Sec. 2.**

(6) education effectiveness practices that:

(i) integrate high-quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, technology, and *curriculum that is rigorous, accurate, antiracist, and culturally sustaining*;

### **Feedback:**

**Antiracism has a noble goal, but has often caused its own issues such as inhibiting students from expressing their views, causing further polarization, and forcing ideologies that don't align with students. With a substantial education gap, it would be much more pertinent to focus on the increase of academic achievement instead of legislating political ideologies.**

## **Article 6 Sec. 3.**

*The district advisory committee shall must recommend to the school board: rigorous academic standards,; student achievement goals and measures consistent with subdivision 1a and sections 120B.022, subdivisions 1a and 1b, and 120B.35,; district assessments,; means to improve students' equitable access to effective and more diverse teachers,; strategies to ensure the curriculum is rigorous, accurate, antiracist, and culturally sustaining; strategies to ensure that curriculum and learning and work environments validate, affirm, embrace, and integrate the cultural and community strengths of all racial and ethnic groups;*

## **Article 6 Sec. 4. [120B.117] INCREASING PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS OF COLOR AND AMERICAN INDIAN TEACHERS IN MINNESOTA.**

*Subd. 2. Equitable access to racially and ethnically diverse teachers. The percentage of teachers in Minnesota who are of color or who are American Indian should increase at least two percentage points per year to have a teaching workforce that more closely reflects the state's increasingly diverse student population and to ensure all students have equitable access to effective and diverse teachers by 2040.*

### **Feedback:**

**Racial quotas are an illiberal concept that isn't necessary to enable a diverse range of teachers and staff. Furthermore, it has a potential to divide staff and force situations that may cause more harm than good. For example, imagine a district where a single teacher of color applies with numerous other teachers. Will the hiring team not feel pressure to hire that teacher of color without regard to the candidate pool's merits and abilities?**

## **Sec. 5. [120B.25] CURRICULUM POLICY.**

A school board must adopt a written policy that *prohibits discrimination or discipline for a teacher or principal on the basis of incorporating into curriculum contributions by persons in a federally protected class or protected class* under section 363A.13 consistent with local collective bargaining agreements.

## **Feedback:**

**The definition of Federally protected classes is so wide and broad that everyone is included here (race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, etc...). I don't understand what this enables beyond existing laws. Maybe clarification could be provided?**

## **Article 6 Sec. 14.**

*Examples of institutional racism experienced by students who are of color or who are American Indian include policies and practices that intentionally or unintentionally result in disparate discipline referrals and suspension, inequitable access to advanced coursework, overrepresentation in lower-level coursework, inequitable participation in cocurricular activities, inequitable parent involvement, and lack of equitable access to racially and ethnically diverse teachers who reflect the racial or ethnic diversity of students because it has not been a priority to hire or retain such teachers.*

## **Feedback:**

**First, students should be held to the exact same disciplinary standards, full stop. There should be no exceptions made based on a person's race, which again, could ultimately divide students and put undo difficulty on staff. Secondly, certainly parent involvement is a key aspect to students' academic career, however, inequitable parent involvement is a matter between the student and their guardians, not a matter for the state. The state has no place in creating legislation around a parents' involvement with their children. Lastly, "diverse teachers who reflect the racial or ethnic diversity of students" implies that a teacher's race is a key factor in the student's learning, which is just not true. Teachers, regardless of their race or background, can, and are, educating our children, all children, right here in Minnesota, and will continue to do so.**

## **Article 6 Sec. 14.**

*(6) collection, examination, and evaluation of academic and discipline data for institutional racism as defined in section 120B.11, subdivision 1, in structures, policies, and practices that result in the education disparities, in order to propose antiracist changes as defined in section 120B.11, subdivision 1, that increase access, meaningful participation, representation, and positive outcomes for students of color and American Indian students;*

## **Feedback:**

**Reiterating from above, discipline should be a standard across the entire student population. Finally, antiracism heavily aligns with political ideology and lacks defeasibility and falsifiability, therefore we don't believe it should be part of legislation.**