

May 3, 2023

Chair Pelowski, Chair Fateh and members of the omnibus Higher Education Finance and Policy Conference Committee:

We write to share a united message from the three State ethnic councils and the Indian Affairs Council in support of our recommendations to better align bill language with the needs of our communities.

First, we express our gratitude for the bipartisan support the Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers Act has received since 2017 and the continued budget appropriations made to help address the educational gaps that exist in Minnesota.

However, the need is greater than the support received to close the equity gaps in education, as Minnesota still ranks 50th in the nation for having the worst racial gaps among its students.

Programs like the Underrepresented Student Teacher grant are vital in supporting our underrepresented students during their teacher preparation program. In 2022, 176 applications were received from eligible students, but funds could only support 140 students. Therefore, we ask committee members to support the House investment for the Underrepresented Student Teacher grants.

As you may be aware, the educational system in Minnesota is facing a major teacher shortage that spans urban, suburban, and rural schools. Minnesota school systems report not being able to hire enough teachers in licensure shortage areas such as English as a Second Language, Early Childhood, Special Education, Career and Technical Education, STEAM, and World Languages.

The Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship addresses this problem while simultaneously addressing the BIPOC teacher shortage. According to OHE's most recent report for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship, in Fall 2022, grant recipients taught in 7 out of 8 statewide shortage areas in education. Increased funding for the Aspiring MN Educators of Color Scholarships and Underrepresented Student Teacher Grants is crucial, because these scholarships and grants will help recruitment and will support hundreds of BIPOC teacher candidates already in preparation pathways to finish their licensure programs and become teachers.

We realize you are tasked with making difficult decisions. Thus, we ask committee members to support shifting the House's proposed increased investment of \$3M per fiscal year for the Loan Repayment program to the Aspiring Teachers of Color scholarship. By doing so, the impact to increase the percentage of BIPOC teachers in Minnesota would be greater than investing in the Teacher Shortage Loan Repayment program by allowing more students to complete their course of study.

We thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and thank you for your commitment to Minnesota and all our students.

Sincerely,

Shannon Geshick | Executive Director | Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Rosa Tock | Executive Director | Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs

Sia Her | Executive Director | Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

Linda Sloan | Executive Director | Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage