



## Testimony to the House of Representatives Legacy Committee

March 19, 2021

### **Support for House File 1722**

Testifiers: Ruby Lee, CLUES President and CEO  
Aaron Johnson-Ortiz, CLUES Director of Arts and Cultural Engagement

Mr. Chair and members, my name is Ruby Lee, and I am the President of CLUES (*Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio* or *Latino Communities United in Service*). I would like to thank Representative Jay Xiong for being our author, Representative Vang for presenting our bill today and being a co-author, and Representatives Hassan and Gomez for being co-authors.

CLUES is Minnesota's largest Latino-led nonprofit, founded 40 years ago. Our work focuses on advancing social and economic equity and strengthening Latino community development and wellbeing. We serve close to 40,000 people annually through culturally tailored services designed to engage people holistically and in multigenerational ways. We deliver our work through our offices in Saint Paul, Minneapolis, Willmar, and Austin and with the help of 100 team members and over 600 volunteers.

Minnesota's Latino population today totals over 300,000 people who are dispersed throughout the State. We are seeking your support of HF1722 to foster the preservation of our Latino culture and to expand Latino-led cultural arts programming. Your support will help us create:

- 1) Culturally-tailored arts programming that create access and engagement in the metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota.
- 2) Engagement of 100 Latino artists and emerging Latino artists.
- 3) Cultural corridors and neighborhood place-making that supports economic development.
- 4) Foster community wellbeing and human and social capital through the arts.

I reserve the rest of my time for the CLUES Director of Arts Programs to further introduce you to our art-centered work.

-----



Mr. Chair and members, my name is Aaron Johnson Ortiz and I lead all arts and cultural engagement programs at CLUES.

Since I came to CLUES close to two years ago, we have:

- ✓ Opened MN's only Latino-centered arts gallery, which provides a platform for artist presentations that is community-owned.
- ✓ Introduced the work of over 70 artists (visual arts, poets, musicians, dancers) from diverse areas of Minnesota.
- ✓ Launched artistic training programs for the next generation of Latino artists, including emerging artists, folk artists, and public artists.
- ✓ Even through the pandemic we've remained open and so far over 15,000 people have access and engaged in our arts programs through hands-on arts learning, virtual programming, and exhibit visitors.

Your support of HF1722 will help CLUES directly expand access and equity to the arts by dedicating investments to:

- 1) Engage 100+ Latino artists in diverse ways, while providing artistic and professional development, mentorship, and networking opportunities.
- 2) Fund public art and muralism projects that foster community healing and multigenerational engagement of underserved Latinos and immigrants.
- 3) Expand access to culturally centered Latino exhibits and intergenerational art programming in the metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota.

Mr. Chair, this completes our presentation and we now stand ready to entertain any questions you or Committee Members may have.