



April 10, 2023

Chair Zack Stephenson
House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee
449 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Paid Family and Medical Leave (HF2/SF2)

Chair Stephenson and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage writes to express support for prudent investments in the economic and social safety-net of all Minnesotans. **We urge your support for the establishment of a new statewide Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (HF2/Richardson and SF2/Mann).**

At this time, U.S. federal law provides for unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act. Minnesota worker and their families depend on the particulars of employer policies and practices for access to family and medical paid leave. The lack of an inclusive universal system leaves most Minnesota workers, particularly those who are BIPOC and low-income, without strong, family-sustaining paid leave protections. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics finds that most employees who self-identify as Black or African American lack access to paid parental leave, paid leave to care for a sick family member, paid leave for childcare, and paid leave for eldercare. Further analysis of U.S. labor data shows that Black women do not take 40 percent of the leaves they need. On top of that, circumstances force them to take 20 percent of their leaves without pay.

The present legislation would establish a statewide standard for paid family and medical leave in Minnesota and, thereby, advance efforts to address long-standing gendered and racial inequalities in the Minnesota economy. In addition to the direct economic benefits to businesses, workers, and their families, strong paid leave protections carry important indirect advantages for economic and social development in African Heritage Minnesotans and other underserved communities. We believe the economic capabilities and rights provided by a statewide paid leave program will help our state combat racial disparities in childhood development, infant and maternal health, long-term mental and physical wellness, and protections against job discrimination.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership on economic and racial justice issues. And thanks to Rep. Richardson and Sen. Mann for sponsoring this legislation.

Sincerely,

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

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*