

To: Chair Liebling and Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee
Re: Support for HF 2113
Date: March 22, 2021

My name is Melvin Hamilton-Aragon and I live in the Powderhorn area of South Minneapolis with my wife and two children. I am originally from Nicaragua and immigrated here seven years ago. I am testifying in support of HF2113 because it is long past time that vaccination efforts are focused on at risk communities of color, including mine.

Recently, I was lucky to be vaccinated against COVID-19, but I wish it did not feel like luck. Several weeks ago I learned that there was a community event happening in our area through Allina. We were surprised, because we thought you had to be over 65. We thought “wow – they are finally thinking about us, seeing what a high death toll there has been in our community at younger ages.”

We spent a long time trying to get through on the phone. My wife and I and several friends finally did get appointments. We gave our social security numbers, they confirmed that we were eligible. Then a few days later I heard that many of my friends were getting called and their appointments were being cancelled. Mine was never cancelled and I thought, “I can’t let the shot go to waste” so I went and was vaccinated.

I have since learned that I received the shot by mistake, and I still do not feel good about it. Other essential workers of color in my neighborhood who are at greater risk still can’t get vaccinated, for no good reason. I think there is too much talk about vaccine hesitancy, but everyone I know wants to get the shot. We have seen too many brown and black people dying. How are we going to explain to our kids why so many people died, and what we did about it?

I have not seen enough talk about making the shot available to people who are at risk in my community. I hope with a new Director of Equity at the Health Department that the next community vaccination event in a neighborhood with many people of color will not be a mistake.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important bill.

Melvin Hamilton-Araong
Minneapolis