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January 9, 2023

Dear Chair Moller and Members of the Public Safety Committee,

On behalf of the Cultural Wellness Center, I am writing to support HF 55 that would establish an Office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls.

The Cultural Wellness Center is a transformative space that incubates culturally-based solutions to real world problems. We are about people, from people, and for people. We partner with communities to develop models to solve problems that have been created by individualism, loss of community, and loss of culture, which our People's Theory of Sickness and Disease states "makes you sick."

There is a clear crisis that requires dedicated resources and we need community-based support and prevention efforts. The estimates are that there are more than 60,000 Black women and girls missing in the United States. There are also concerns as the data shows that these cases remain four times longer than their peers. In Minnesota, the data is disturbing as Black women are 7% of the population and make up 40% of domestic violence victims in the state. A dedicated office is a step in the right direction to work towards prevention Elder efforts, provide answers for grieving families, and to work with community on Elder strategies and solutions.

We urge the passage of HF 55 and respectfully ask that members support its passage.

Sincerely,

*Atum Azzahir*

Mary "Atum" Azzahir

Executive Director

***We unleash the power of people to heal themselves and build community***

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