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January 11, 2023

Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee members,

As Social Services Director in Dakota County, I am writing to express my support for House File 55 which would establish an office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls in Minnesota.

I have observed in our daily work in Social Services the impacts of violence on Black women and girls. Black women are more likely to experience domestic violence, housing instability, and poverty than white women. Black children and youth are more likely to experience school discipline, foster care, homelessness, and sexual exploitation than their white peers. These issues are interconnected and require a coordinated effort to address systemic barriers to health and stability that put Black women and girls at greater risk of violence.

Increasing representation of Black practitioners within institutions that serve women and children is an important first step, but resources and support must also be targeted to Black families to address the underlying social and economic conditions that make them more vulnerable. These efforts require time and intention, which is why a dedicated office is so critical in Minnesota.

Based on my experience leading a complex public social services system, I support HF 55 and the establishment of an office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Evan Henspeter". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Evan Henspeter
Director of Social Services