

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2023

Rep. Kelly Moller  
Chair, Public Safety Finance and Policy  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Moller:

We write to express our support for establishing an Office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls within the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs.

Nationwide, Black women and girls make up 34 percent of the women and girls reported missing despite only making up 15 percent of the female population.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, Minnesota became the first state in the country to respond to this crisis by designating a task force to examine the issue and produce a report and recommendations for the Minnesota Legislature.<sup>2</sup> The bill creating the task force passed out of committee with bipartisan support.<sup>3</sup>

For more than a year, the task force reviewed literature, collected data, and conducted interviews to document the experiences of survivors of violence.<sup>4</sup> According to the task force's findings, even though Black women make up only 7 percent of the population in Minnesota, they represent 40 percent of domestic violence victims.<sup>5</sup> Black women and girls in Minnesota are nearly three times as likely to be murdered.<sup>6</sup> The task force's first recommendation is to create a new office to continue this work.

Establishing a new office would increase the state's ability to track and analyze how missing persons cases are handled, help families to get the closure that they deserve by supporting reviews of cold cases for missing Black women and girls, and lead efforts to decrease the number of cases that go unreported or unresolved. We have seen how establishing an Office for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives has helped to bring attention to the issue of missing

---

<sup>1</sup> Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force, *Final Report* at 5 (Dec. 2022) (hereinafter "MMAAW Final Report"), available at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/Documents/MMAAW%20full%20report%20final.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>3</sup> See The Associated Press, *Panel backs task force on missing and murdered Black women*, MPRNews, Feb. 19, 2021, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/02/19/panel-backs-task-force-on-missing-and-murdered-black-women>.

<sup>4</sup> MMAAW Final Report. at 2, 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>6</sup> See *id.*

and murdered indigenous women. Since Minnesota established its office, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin have followed suit.<sup>7</sup>

In 2022, the United States Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act with key provisions to support states and localities in addressing gender-based violence and promote the use of evidence-based practices by law enforcement when investigating these crimes. We pushed for these provisions and encourage Minnesota to build upon this progress by establishing a Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls Office.

We are grateful for the work of the Task Force on Missing and Murdered African American Women to shine light on this important issue and urge the legislators to take action on its recommendations.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Amy Klobuchar in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Tina Smith in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Tina Smith  
U.S. Senator

---

<sup>7</sup> Kate Nelson, *Native Women and Girls Are In Crisis. In a First-of-Its-Kind Role, Juliet Rudie Is Hoping to Change That*, Elle (July 18, 2022), <https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a40606339/juliet-rudie-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-crisis-minnesota/>.