



March 21, 2023
Chair Hodan Hassan
Economic Development Finance and Policy

Dear Chair Hassan and members of the Committee,

I'm writing in support of HF2789 as I am not able to make it in person to testify. I am the Executive Director of Quorum, Minnesota's LGBTQ+ and Allied Chamber of Commerce. For over 27 years, Quorum has been working to build, connect, and strengthen the LGBTQ+ and Allied business communities across Minnesota. We are not your grandparent's chamber of commerce.

True inclusion allows LGBTQ+ people to achieve their economic potential when they get the education and training that improves productivity and when they are treated equally in the labor market. We believe this program will do exactly that.

We know that LGBTQ+ business owners have been deeply impacted by a variety of issues. Our small business owners here in Minnesota continue to struggle to find capital, to find employees, to find the education and support necessary to start and scale their businesses. Financial equity is crucial in moving from surviving to thriving. As we know, the strongest economies are the ones that include and engage everyone. And this program does that.

This program invests in the very infrastructure of LGBTQ+ owned businesses. From small business grants to wrap around education and technical assistance, we are here to move the economic needle. The ripple effects of this investment are limitless. Stronger individuals. Stronger main streets. Stronger families. Though we've made great strides in Minnesota, for too many, being LGBTQ+ is the biggest detriment to their business.

The LGBTQ+ business community is persisting despite both the economic impacts of the pandemic and the forces of inequality and discrimination that are still far too prevalent in America.

We must keep the thousands of Minnesota's LGBTQ business owners who grow local economies and create jobs in mind when shaping legislation that creates equal opportunities for everyone. They drive economic development, create jobs, and build stronger communities, all despite the latent, and often outright hostile, discrimination they continue to endure on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Diversity is good for business. Giving queer people economic agency won't solve every issue, but it gives us an opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rebecca Waggoner
Quorum, Executive Director