

The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color  
and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota

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Dear Chair Richardson and House Education Policy Committee Members,

Thank you for today's hearing and for adopting all provisions from last year's bill in your omnibus bill last session. This hearing has given us all the opportunity to listen to the powerful testimonies from youth and educators.

This bill is the 6<sup>th</sup> version of the Increase Teachers of Color Act since the first one in 2017. A year earlier during the 2016 legislative session when Republicans led the House and Democrats led the Senate, we successfully advocated to get several statutes amended. These amendments stated all students shall have "equitable access to effective and diverse teachers" who "reflect the diversity of students in their schools." As you heard today, students still do not have equitable access to teachers of color. **However, IF** Minnesota students today did have equitable access to teachers who reflect students' diversity, there would be 22,000 teachers of color and American Indian teachers! Instead, there are fewer than 3,000 teachers of color. **WE'RE IN A VERY DEEP HOLE that needs your support of important policy changes to close opportunity gaps and help ensure state investments lead to positive outcomes.**

Tens of thousands of students in Minnesota will go through their entire K12 education without ever having the opportunity to learn from even one teacher who is of color or American Indian. Think about the short and long-term effects this has on both students of color and white students. Think about never having the opportunity to learn from the cultural knowledge and experiences we teachers of color bring to the classroom and our students' families.

Another effect of the shortage of teachers of color is the drain this severe and persistent shortage has on our economy. **Society and the economy will benefit** from more teachers of color because K12 and Higher Education opportunity and achievement gaps will narrow if you pass the proposed policies in this bill that will lead to systemic change.

The largest state investment last year was in the Grow Your Own grant program, and there was an overwhelming response from more than 50 districts seeking more than 4 times the amount appropriated. For plants and crops to grow well, we know that they need good soil and climate. That's why the policy provisions in this bill are also crucial. They will improve learning and work environments to help ensure a return on existing state investments and the larger investments that are still needed.

Our broad coalition and this legislation have a wide base of support from a variety of groups that don't always agree on other education issues. We are grateful that several of you from both parties have authored and co-authored the Increase Teachers of Color Act over the years. This year we thank Rep. Hassan for carrying this bill along with Republican Senator Duckworth. We hope this bill will return to having bipartisan support in this committee, and you try to find compromise on policies issues such as LIFO that also effect teachers of color.

**THE TIME IS NOW** for systemic change and to do what is right. Students can't wait any longer. Lives and futures are at stake. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Regina Seabrook  
Tri-Chair, Coalition Core Steering Committee