



April 30, 2023

Chair Ron Latz

Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Conference Committee

3105 Minnesota Senate Bldg.

St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Kelly Moller

Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Conference Committee

509 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Public Safety Priorities in the Judiciary and Public Safety Omnibus Budget (SF2909/HF2890) and the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session

Chair Latz, Chair Moller, and Conference Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage thanks you for your work on legislative proposals that will improve state and local judiciary and public safety institutions in Minnesota. Minnesotans who self-identify as Black or African descent are disproportionately impacted by racial disparities and other institutional weaknesses in our justice and policing systems.

This letter sketches our Council's public safety priorities based on African Heritage constituent concerns and engagements regarding civil rights and community safety challenges. We urge you to ensure that the legislative measures below are included in the Public Safety Omnibus (SF2909/HF2890) or passed by other means during the Minnesota Legislature's 2023 Regular Session.

Abolition and Equality

Constitutional Amendment Prohibiting Slavery and Involuntary Servitude as Criminal Punishment HF93/Pinto and SF43/Champion - Ask voters whether the Minnesota Constitution should be amended to prohibit the use of slavery or involuntary servitude as criminal punishment for a crime, thereby removing one of the last remnants of legal slavery in the Americas.

Equal Rights Amendment HF173/Her and SF37/Kunesh - Ask voters whether the Minnesota Constitution should be amended to guarantee equality under law, meaning such equality shall not be abridged or denied based on race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ancestry, or national origin.

Civil Rights

Bias Crimes Laws and Reporting Expanded HF181/Vang and SF691/Mohamed - Expand Minnesota's laws on crimes motivated by bias to recognize bias due to a person's gender.

Civil Legal Aid and Public Defender Services Funding (HF1580/Becker-Finn and SF2238/Latz) - Improve Minnesota's capacity to provide its residents with legal aid and public defense by investing in the recruitment and salary increases for civil legal services lawyers and public defenders.

Pay Discrimination Act or Review of Past Pay Prohibited HF1625/Her and SF1885/Kupec - Combat salary discrimination against Black women and others burdened by systemic wage gaps by preventing employers from requesting a job applicant's pay history.

Community Safety

Community Crime and Violence Prevention Funding HF25/Frazier and SF524/Latz - Expand local capabilities for crime and violence prevention by investing in community organizations and practitioners that provide juvenile diversion programs, mental health crisis interventions, and victim support services.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders for Firearms HF15/Frazier and SF1117/Latz - Allow family members, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and city/county attorneys to raise a 'red flag' about a person who poses a significant danger to themselves and others and, thereby, allow concerned community members petition a court to prevent the person from possessing a firearm.

Firearms Background Checks HF14/Pinto and SF1116/Latz - Close the loophole in gun safety background checks by requiring criminal background check for private transfers of pistols and semiautomatic military-style assault weapons.

Syringe Services Providers Authorization (HF2041 Gomez, SF 2261 Oumou Verbeten) - Establish a Syringe Service Program to advance harm reduction and rehabilitative practice in the treatment of substance use disorder. Take steps to address community and expert concerns about measures that criminalize addiction patients by amending or removing language that requires penalties for fentanyl. Considering how drug policy has devastated Black communities with high rates of incarceration and violence, community members expect federal and state institutions will strike the right balance between punishment and rehabilitation.

Justice and Policing

Clean Slate Act HF2023/Long and SF2055/Champion - Establish an automatic expungement process for certain offenses.

No-Knock Warrants Prohibition HF2290/Curran and SF2259/Oumou Verbeten - A ban on no-knock warrants is needed because innocent people should not have to live in fear that police will enter their homes without warning and put their lives at risk. Such a ban also follows best practices of states and localities that are moving beyond a traditional militarized model of policing that assumes a state of war between community

and law enforcement. No-knock warrants and the war model must be replaced by culture-building strategies that bring community and law enforcement into alignment as mutual partners in public safety.

Office of Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls HF55/Richardson and SF19/Champion - Establish an office to study and support state response to the crises of violence against Black women and girls, including gendered racial disparities in homicides, missing persons, and rulings regarding death by suicide or overdose.

Public Safety Innovations HF855/Frazier and SF839 - Establish a statewide innovation and oversight board to conduct research and make recommendations to state government about strategies for improving public safety practices. Ensure that the work of this Public Safety Innovation Board is anchored in evidence-based practices and equity principles of robust community empowerment and social inclusion.

Thank you for considering our request. And thanks for your leadership and partnership on issues of civil rights and community safety in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Theodore Rose | Legislative and Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*