April 6, 2021

Written Testimony of Youthprise President Wokie Weah
Regarding the House Omnibus Jobs Bill

Chair Noor and Members of the House Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy Committee:

Thank you for bringing forward an Omnibus Jobs Bill that **contains many policies that will have a tremendously positive impact on Minnesota's youth and families**, including **repealing the prohibition on secondary school students receiving unemployment insurance** and **ensuring that families are not penalized by students' Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits** when determining eligibility for means-tested programs.

We also understand and support the Committee's and the Walz Administration's desire to transition the Workforce Development Fund from direct appropriations to a competitive grant process. This approach has the opportunity to open up access to these dollars to a broader array of organizations across the state.

In doing so, **it will be critical to ensure the Workforce Development Fund has the necessary dollars to continue the important work that has been carried out through these direct appropriations in the past**. For instance, Youthprise has received money the past four years to provide competitive grants to organizations throughout Minnesota that offer career exploration and planning, internship and apprenticeship placement, education and language support, mentoring, and many other services to East African youth.

This funding has helped thousands of youth transition more successfully into our state's workforce. With many youth and families still reeling from one of the largest labor market downturns in our country's history, these programs are needed more than ever. As a result, **we encourage the Committee to fully fund the Administration's budget recommendation for the Workforce Development Fund** to ensure there are enough resources to support this and other important work with Minnesota youth that has historically been funded by these dollars.

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