

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

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March 24, 2022

Dear Chair Richardson and House Education Policy Committee Members,

Thank you for including proposed policies from the Increase Teachers of Color Act (HF3079) in the proposed omnibus policy bill HF3401DE.

As you know from the hearing of HF3079, students still do not have equitable access to teachers of color despite several statutes amended in 2016 saying that all students shall have “equitable access to effective and diverse teachers” who “reflect the diversity of students in their schools” (MN Statutes 122A.40, 122A.41, 124D.861, 127A.05, 120B.11) **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.**

Last year historic investments were made in several important grant programs, and this year our Coalition is seeking additional investments needed to “move the needle” and increase the percentage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers. For example, 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. However, 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 Abeler (SF3084) and the clone bill Sen. Kunesh (SF3132). We hope this bill will return to having bipartisan support in this committee, and you try 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 more. Lives and futures are at stake. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Paul Spies, PhD
Legislative Action Team Lead