COUNCIL ON ASIAN PACIFIC MINNESOTANS

January 24, 2023

Chair Pryor and members of the Education Policy Committee:

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans ("the Council") writes this letter in support of H.F. 368, offered by Representative Hanson, which would direct school districts to adopt written policies to prohibit and address acts of sadistic and malicious conduct intended to cause harm to another based on race and other protected categories.

The Council, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 15.0145 advises the Legislature and the Governor on behalf of Minnesota's Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) ancestry communities. It is in this capacity that we urge the passage of this legislative proposal and offer a suggestion to strengthen it further.

According to the Stop AAPI Hate National Report, issued in July 2022, nearly 11,500 incidents motivated by bias against API communities and individuals were reported across the nation between March 19, 2020 and March 31, 2021. This dramatic increase of 149%, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, chills Minnesota's API community, leaving us feeling threatened, fearful, and unsafe in own homes, neighborhoods, businesses, and schools. It is more important than ever for government to take any and all necessary legislative actions to prevent acts of harassment and violence.

House File 368 is an important step in the right direction; as the Council we support this bill and we suggest an amendment to strengthen this proposal. The list of protected classes in the bill should be updated to mirror the anti-discrimination protections listed in the Minnesota Human Rights Act (Minn. Stat. § 363A.13), as well as including sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. Critically for our API community, this would explicitly add national origin to the list of protected groups in this bill, addressing that hate and bias directed towards the API community has been about more than race, but also national origin.

On both lines 1.12 and 2.2 of H.F. 368 (As Introduced) we would suggest replacing the current list ("race, gender, religion, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, and sexual exploitation") with the following: "race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, disability, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation." This change would cover all the protected classes in the Minnesota Human Rights Act's education provision, as well as explicitly addressing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation already covered in this bill.

If passed as amended, H.F. 368 would put in play a more comprehensive approach to addressing anti-Asian hate in our schools and thereby promote a safer state for our API communities. By taking steps to address malicious and sadistic conduct involving not just race, but also gender, religious belief, and sexual harassment, orientation, and sexual exploitation in our schools, this bill will also help ensure that students are able to perform to their best abilities free from the fear such acts instill in our communities. Safe schools, free from discrimination and harassment, are a critical part of building safe communities, and districts having clear policies in this area is a key tool to achieve this goal.

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We urge the passage of H.F. 368, believing at this time that this action is necessary to ensuring a safer and more effective learning environment for all students.

Sincerely,

Andrew Morris
Public Affairs and Legislative Liaison
Andrew.Morris@state.mn.us