



161 Saint Anthony Avenue Suite 919
Saint Paul, MN 55113

December 17, 2021

Senator Carla Nelson
Minnesota Senate Building
Room 2411.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Fue Lee
485 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Carla Nelson and Representative Fue Lee

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) is pleased to support your bill, SF 178/HF 313, which would establish an Alzheimer's disease and dementia public information program. The mission of MIAC is to protect the sovereignty of the eleven Minnesota Tribal Nations and to ensure the well-being of American Indian citizens throughout the state of Minnesota.

This bill will help our people by educating on the difference between normal cognitive aging and dementia, on stressing the importance of early detection and discussing cognitive health with a healthcare provider, and on the early warning signs of cognitive impairment. There is stigma and misunderstanding that exists about dementia, and SF 178/HF 313 will take an important step in helping our people to overcome this stigma. According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than half of non-white Americans believe significant memory loss or loss of cognition is a "normal part of aging" and more than one-third of Native people do not believe they will live long enough to develop dementia. Additionally, one-third of American Indians over the age of 65 will develop Alzheimer's or another dementia, and only 1 in 3 with memory loss will have talked with their health care provider about it.

We support your efforts to reach underserved, diverse communities disproportionately impacted by Alzheimer's including Minnesota's Native and Indigenous peoples with this public information program. We agree with your approach that engages with these communities in the development of the program itself by requiring that program materials include culturally specific messages developed



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in consultation with leaders in targeted cultural communities who have experience with dementia. MIAC would be willing to partner with the Minnesota Department of Health on messaging to reach members in our communities.

Across the country, the American Indian population is growing, and our people are living longer. The number of older American Indian adults is increasing; it is expected to triple over the next three decades. Having a larger set of older tribal members is a blessing as our elders bring wisdom, experience, knowledge, and contributions to their communities. They offer a bridge to the past – and hope for the future – as keepers of language, history, and tradition and play a highly respected role in their families and in the community. Your bill will help our communities care for our elders living with Alzheimer’s disease by providing us all with the education and resources needed to promote the importance of cognitive health and early detection and to break down the stereotypes about dementia.

We ask the Minnesota Legislature to pass SF 178/HF 313.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RL', followed by a long horizontal line.

Robert L. Larsen
President, Lower Sioux Indian Community
Board Chair, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

cc: Shannon Geshick, MIAC
Sherry Sanchez, Alzheimer’s Association Minnesota-North Dakota