

Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang

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March 14, 2022

Representative Tina Liebling, Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Rep. Liebling and Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

We are writing to offer our unconditional support of HF4099. We are leaders of the early childhood education program *Gookonaanig Endaawaad (Grandma's House)* on the Fond du Lac reservation near Cloquet, Minnesota and beneficiaries of the Community Solutions Grant Program operated by the Center for Health Equity of the Minnesota Department of Health.

Grandma's House brings elder-first speakers and Ojibwe language staff together with parents and children ages 0 to 5 years in a cooperative, homelike environment. The children are immersed in Ojibwe language and culture at the center and the parents continue immersion at home. Our goal is for parents to be able to raise children with clear and uncompromising Ojibwe identities so they have heightened resilience against the mental and emotional challenges they will face as indigenous persons growing up in English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon culture.

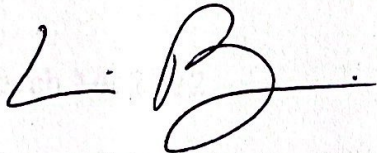
Our Community Solutions grant has enabled five mothers and one father to participate in *Grandma's House* alongside their eight children. The parents have been able to take courses with language faculty and to participate in tutorials with elder-first speakers. This support has enabled them to continue language and culture immersion at home, overcoming a large barrier experienced by other programs that have not been able to engage parents with their children. Our program is succeeding because parents are directly involved, and they are able to be involved because of support from Community Solutions.

By helping to build strong identities in the early years of life, children of BIPOC communities in Minnesota can build better resilience to the mental, emotional, and physical challenges they will face as they mature. Community Solutions is helping to

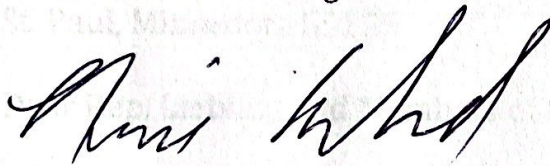
address health inequities among its indigenous citizens by strengthening the ability of parents to raise children in their Native language and culture. Improving health equity benefits all Minnesotans by providing a more diverse cultural landscape in which everyone has the chance to flourish.

We hope you agree that HF4099 will advance health equity in Minnesota and give more children a clear path to the wellbeing they deserve.

Very sincerely yours,



Wezaawibinesiik Lucia Bonacci
Director, *Gookonaanig Endaawaad*



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Office and Grants Manager
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