



April 9, 2021

Chair Mohamud Noor
House Workforce and Business Development Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for the Workforce and Business Development Omnibus Bill

Chair Noor and Members,

The Council offers its strong support for the DE amendment to HF 1342, the Workforce and Business Development Committee omnibus. All Minnesotans are coping with economic uncertainty. At the same time, the economic and health crises of the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened racial disparities and the impacts of these disadvantages in our communities. African Heritage Minnesotans and other underserved communities, therefore, face unique challenges that require targeted legislation.

We would like to thank your Committee for consideration of funding and policy proposals that seek to respond to the ways structural economic challenges are experienced by the African Heritage Community and other communities of color:

- 1. High unemployment, irregular unemployment, and low wages**
- 2. Inadequate finance capital for business enterprise development**
- 3. Want of the skills development opportunities that drive economic ingenuity and mobility**

Specifically, we want to highlight the following provisions in the bill:

- 1. \$50M Small Business COVID Support Grant Program**
- 2. \$10M Grant Program to Increase Access to Child Care**
- 3. \$10.6M Grant Program for Community-Based Business Development Services, including at least \$4M to fund and support women of color entrepreneurs**
- 4. Prioritization of BIPOC Communities in the Delivery of Workforce Development Services**
- 5. Microenterprise Development Program**
- 6. Removing Barriers to Employment Grant Program**
- 7. Innovative Employment Solutions Grant Program**
- 8. Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefit Insurance Program**
- 9. Unemployment Insurance Eligibility for Youth Workers, Senior Workers, and School Workers**

We urge this Committee to take further steps to ensure success of the following bill proposals in the legislature:

- 1. PROMISE Act HF6**
- 2. Women of Color Opportunity Act HF389**
- 3. Ujamaa Place HF612**
- 4. Redevelopment Appropriation Bond Issuance for Areas Damaged by Civil Unrest HF728**
- 5. African Economic Development Solutions HF875**

The provisions in the omnibus bill and the above bill proposals are needed to better support people of African heritage and other communities of color in the face of the unique economic and social challenges they face. Thanks for your leadership in this work. Please prioritize your proposals and the above recommendations in conference committee negotiations.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan
Executive Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage