

Letters and Testimony
for
HF 2821 (Sencer-Mura)

March 19, 2024

Dear Chair Hassan and Members of the Economic Development and Policy Committee:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota supports HF2821, a pivotal piece of legislation that aims to establish a process for requesting a racial equity impact note for proposed legislation. For more than 90 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota has been carrying out its mission to pave the way for everyone to achieve their healthiest life. A nonprofit, taxable organization, Blue Cross is the leading health plan in Minnesota, covering nearly 2.5 million members and serving all 87 counties in Minnesota. This legislation aligns seamlessly with our organization's deep commitment to advancing racial and health equity and addressing systemic inequities.

In 2020, Blue Cross joined local organizations, municipal and county governments, and the Minnesota House of Representatives in declaring racism a public health crisis. It is imperative that we acknowledge and address the structural racism that perpetuates health disparities and inequities within our communities. As underscored by the House Select Committee on Racial Justice's Report to the Legislature, these disparities are deeply rooted in structural inequities, including racism, housing insecurity, and economic instability.

From our advocacy efforts against Big Tobacco to our support for universal meals and our longstanding commitment to racial and health equity in all policies, we have consistently worked to dismantle systemic barriers and promote racial and health equity for all Minnesotans.

HF2821 represents a critical step forward in our collective efforts to address racial and economic disparities in policy making and analysis. By embedding racial equity impact assessments into the legislative process, this bill proactively addresses the root causes of health inequities.

We urge the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee to advance this vital legislation. Together, we can create a more equitable and just society for all Minnesotans, where everyone can thrive. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to advancing racial and health equity in our state. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Vayong Moua, Director of Racial and Health Equity Advocacy



Lin Nelson, Vice President of Public Affairs



March 20, 2024

Chair Hassan and members of the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of UCare, we are writing to express our support of HF 2821. This pivotal legislation aims to establish a process for requesting a racial equity impact note to be added for proposed legislation.

HF 2821 is directly aligned with our mission to become an antiracist organization. By including racial equity impact assessments to proposed legislation, policymakers will be able to proactively address systemic inequities in policy making and analysis. In the health policy sphere, policymakers will be able to better address social determinants of health.

Research estimates that addressing health disparities could save billions of dollars annually and emphasizes the urgency of implementing policies aimed at advancing health equity and addressing the social determinants of health.

By embedding racial equity impact assessments into the legislative process, HF 2821 has the potential to not only improve governance and promote economic stability but also to significantly advance racial and health equity in Minnesota. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of social determinants of health and racial disparities, paving the way for more equitable policy decision that address root causes rather than symptoms.

HF 2821 represents a crucial step towards building a more equitable and just society for all Minnesotans. We urge you to support this vital legislation and ensure a swift passage through the House Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Ulland".

Joel Ulland
Vice President Public Affairs Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Radford, Jr.".

Pleasant Radford, Jr.
Health Equity Officer



March 18, 2024

Dear Chair Hassan and members of the Economic Development, Finance, and Policy Committee,

We, Faith and Jenna, representing different facets of the City of Bloomington, write to express our unified support for bill HF2821, which aims to establish a process for requesting a racial equity impact note for proposed legislation. HF2821 aligns seamlessly with Bloomington's commitment to cultivating an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be. We understand that racial equity strategies, while focused on addressing systemic disparities faced by marginalized communities, ultimately benefit all individuals by creating more inclusive and accessible environments.

Faith Jackson, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer

Bloomington's journey towards racial equity has been deliberate and collaborative. In 2015, the city leaders participated in the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) convening. By December 2017, the City Council adopted a Racial Equity Vision Statement. In 2020, the City Council adopted the Racial Equity Business Plan (REBP), charting the path for an expansion of the City's racial equity work. Soon after, the City Council declared racism a public health crisis and empaneled a Racial Equity Strategic Planning Committee (RESPC) to identify impactful policies and practices that disrupt racial disparities.

Among other things, the Racial Equity Business Plan directed staff to develop a tool for assessing racial equity impacts in our decision-making processes. Building upon the directive, we established the Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Microbusiness, embarking on a rigorous six-month research and design phase to create a comprehensive assessment tool. Following approval by the Executive Leadership Team, the REIA pilot program was launched, with Community Development and Public Works staff serving as primary users. Through intensive training sessions, staff not only learned the importance of the tool but also acquired the skills necessary to effectively utilize it in real-time projects.

Currently, REIAs are utilized on the following legislative actions: new ordinances and updates to ordinances, modifications to City code, and program requests that significant funding implications are not included in budget process. Staff who prepare racial equity assessments collaborate closely with the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to gather relevant data, analyze impacts, and engage community stakeholders. This partnership is essential in ensuring that the assessment process remains manageable for staff while upholding its integrity and effectiveness.

Given our experience, I would strongly encourage the legislature to adopt a similar model, where internal equity staff and external research institutions collaborate to support staff in completing assessments. This collaborative approach balances the need for thorough analysis with practical considerations related to time constraints and workloads.



Jenna Carter, Council Member at Large

As a policymaker, I have witnessed the tangible benefits of integrating racial equity considerations into decision-making processes. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Business Displacement Policy/Anti-displacement Policy*: Through the use of REIAs, Bloomington policymakers were able to assess the potential impact of these policies on marginalized communities, ensuring that economic development initiatives do not exacerbate existing disparities or displace vulnerable populations.
- *Food Truck Licensing*: REIAs were utilized to examine how food truck licensing regulations might disproportionately affect BIPOC owned businesses, leading to adjustments in policies to promote equitable access to entrepreneurial opportunities.
- *Rental Housing Code (Definition of A Family)*: By conducting REIAs, policymakers were able to identify and address discriminatory practices within the rental housing sector, ensuring fair treatment and access to housing for all residents regardless of race or ethnicity.

REIAs have become an indispensable tool in my decision-making process. They highlight areas where proposed policies may unintentionally perpetuate racial disparities, allowing me to proactively address these issues before they become entrenched. In addition to identifying issues, REIAs help us proactively develop policies that respond to community needs. For example, the Food Truck Ordinance REIA study revealed that food trucks can promote a culture of health in low-income communities. This led to the creation of food truck marketplace events to increase access to healthy foods in sections of the city that historically lacked healthy food options.

Furthermore, as a public health professional, I understand the critical importance of addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, affordable housing, transportation, and equitable development. I know that efforts to address racial disparities, such as improving access to healthcare services and reducing healthcare inequities, result in better health outcomes for everyone. When marginalized communities receive the care and support, they need, it leads to healthier communities overall, reducing healthcare costs and improving quality of life for all residents.

Together, we advocate for the adoption of HF2821, recognizing its potential to advance racial equity in legislative processes. By addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusion, these strategies benefit not only specific racial or ethnic groups but contribute to the well-being and prosperity of society. In embracing Racial Equity Impact Notes, we affirm our commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and advancing social justice for all members of our community.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Faith Jackson, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer

Jenna Carter, Council Member at Large



March 18, 2024

Dear Chair Hassan and members of Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee,

We write today to urge support for [HF2821](#), a pivotal piece of legislation that aims to establish a process for requesting a racial equity impact note for proposed legislation.

Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity (MDHEQ) is a statewide nonprofit that works to educate and activate health professionals to work toward health equity. As medical professionals, we see firsthand the effects of racism that have led to conditions in which Black, Indigenous and other people of color do not have the same opportunity as white people in Minnesota to live healthy lives.

HF2821 is directly aligned with our vision to eliminate the inequities that exist in health and healthcare. By embedding racial equity impact assessments for proposed laws, this bill would enable the state to more proactively identify and address systemic inequities in policymaking and analysis in line with the identified recommendations in the House Select Committee on Racial Justice: [Report to the Legislature](#).

Minnesota is, on average, one of the healthiest states in the nation— yet, averages fail to tell the whole story. For decades, Minnesota has had some of the WORST racial health disparities in the United States. Compared to white populations, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in Minnesota experience shorter life spans and higher incidences of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases. A recent [report](#) from Minnesota Community Measurement documents how the wide disparities in health care quality and outcomes in our state have continued. Further, [research](#) conducted by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota revealed the staggering economic toll of health inequities in our state, estimating that addressing these disparities could save billions of dollars annually. This work cannot wait— research from the Center for Advancing Research in Health Equity (CARHE) at the University of Minnesota emphasizes the [urgency](#) of implementing policies aimed at advancing health equity and addressing the social determinants of health.

By embedding racial equity impact assessments into the legislative process, HF2821 has the potential to significantly advance racial and health equity in Minnesota. This bill aligns with MDHEQ's [efforts](#) to recognize and address racism as a public health crisis, which emphasizes the importance of proactively reviewing all policies and procedures



submitted with a framework that considers impacts on racial equity and ramifications to health, implementing and moving forward only those that move our state towards equity.

In conclusion, HF2821 represents a crucial step towards building a more equitable and just society for all Minnesotans. We urge you to support this important legislation and ensure its swift passage through the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee.

Sincerely,

Cuong Pham, MD
President
Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity