

12 March 2021

Capital Investment Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Committee Chair Lee, Vice Chair Murphy, and other Capital Investment Committee members:

I am writing to support a bonding bill sponsored by Representative Jay Xiong (67B) to be introduced on March 18, which includes the Asian American Center for Media and the Arts (AACMA) led by award-winning artists May Lee-Yang, Saymoukda Vongsay, and Naomi Ko, founders of the Funny Asian Women Kollektive (FAWK). The AACMA will build up the arts and community in Saint Paul, particularly Eastside. As we phase out systemic racism and oppression, we need local organizations such as FAWK to lead community growth and healing.

Through humor, FAWK counters the social silencing of Asian women. The outcomes of such silencing appear in data collected in 2020 by Stop AAPI Hate, where women reported 2.4 times more anti-Asian incidents than men. FAWK's Clapback Workshops helped me and other Asian women/non-binary people speak against microaggressions we experience daily. I performed in a November 2018 Clapback Cabaret and in FAWK's October 2019 Super Show. As I developed this material, I discovered my message for audiences in the Twin Cities and beyond. Our Super Show may have been the first in US history to center voices of ten Asian women. This show sold out, indicating a pent-up demand for more Asian American storytelling. Furthermore, FAWK events have sparked conversations about racism and sexism with my white spouse, which he has taken to his white suburban workplace.

By supporting FAWK and the AACMA in this bill, you can foster essential community building. AACMA would provide a home for FAWK's collaborations with other communities of color such as a recent online event with Blackout, a Black improv comedy group. In times such as pandemic and civil unrest, AACMA would also join other venues like Indigenous Roots collecting donations and assisting the neighborhood. As a reading tutor with the East Side Learning Center I have worked with children from Hmong, Karen, and other underserved Eastside populations. Asians and other BIPOC communities remain underrepresented in our curriculum and libraries. Our students and their families need institutions like AACMA to show them that they matter too.

Asians have lived in Minnesota almost as long as the Scandinavians, yet our stories remain overlooked. AACMA would support Minnesota's Asian American artists. It would provide FAWK a stable rehearsal space and allow control over recordings and images. Such flexibility would better position FAWK to enhance the portfolios of beginning Asian American performers such as myself.

Thank you for your kind attention. Please join me in your support for FAWK and the AACMA .

Sincerely,



Patti Kameya