

March 28, 2023

Dear Chair Xiong and Members of the House Workforce Development Finance and Policy Committee:

Unidos Minnesota is an immigrant-led, state-wide organization building power for Minnesota working families to advance social, racial, and economic justice. We are an organization born out of the immigration justice movement. Immigration, education, healthcare, and climate justice are at the core of our work.

Our constituency is composed of essential workers and frontline communities, whose voices are critical to shaping the green energy transition. Moreover, the impact of a truly equitable policy must prioritize these communities. Therefore, we enthusiastically support language in H.F. 2233, for a Clean Economy Equitable Workforce appropriation to provide a much-needed pathway for historically disenfranchised communities, including New Americans, to achieve careers in green construction and renewable energy.

Throughout history, low wage workers, BIPOC communities and New Americans have been excluded from big shifts in our market economy, leaving local communities in states of precarity and distress. Racial inequities now exacerbated under a climate crisis and a post-pandemic recovery continue to overburden frontline communities. Hence, the inclusion of a Clean Economy Equitable Workforce appropriation in the omnibus legislation is of critical importance, because while our state prepares for a once-in-a generation transition away from fossil fuels, this language lays out a foundation to ensure that the most underserved workers are empowered to provide solutions and contributions to our renewable future.

Traditionally disenfranchised communities need a feasible roadmap to access well-paying union jobs to live dignified, prosperous lives. A Clean Economy Equitable Workforce appropriation creates a new mechanism to support organizations possessing strong networks in communities of color to develop partnerships with registered apprenticeship programs. These collaborations will thus create and implement culturally relevant, workforce development and job readiness programs harnessing the unique opportunities brought forward by our state's transition to 100% clean and renewable energy.

For Minnesota, a just green transition presents a historic opportunity to disrupt cycles of occupational segregation by giving the most vulnerable access to career paths. The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that environmental health, climate change, and worker safety & protections are inextricably intertwined. Yet, one disastrous compounded effect of this reality was the exacerbation of racial inequity due to the occupational segregation of Black and Latino workers in low-wage jobs. For instance, the Latino community is severely underrepresented in occupations such as utility work, where Latinos comprise only 1.2% of the workforce.¹ A Clean Economy Equitable Workforce appropriation will build a pathway for workers of color to access and succeed in industries where they are significantly underrepresented, such as the utilities.

This legislative session presents a historic opportunity to place the prosperity and the well-being of all Minnesotans front and center, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, immigration status, dis/ability, and gender identity. Moreover, the workers that kept the state running through the COVID-19 pandemic while most of us sheltered at home, deserve to be included in the design of a green transition meant to uplift all Minnesotans. Thank you for the inclusion of the Clean Economy Equitable Workforce appropriation in the omnibus legislation.

Should you have any questions, please contact me or our Policy Director, Sara Lopez. Sara can be reached by email at sara@unidos-mn.org or by phone at (507) 581-4211.

Respectfully submitted,

Emilia Gonzales Avalos



Executive Director, Unidos, MN.
emilia@unidos-mn.org

¹ <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/publications/trends/december-2015/diversity-industry.jsp>



1515 East Lake Street Suite 202
Minneapolis, MN 55407
Telephone: (612) 231-9719
Email: info@unidos-mn.org