

March 27, 2023

The Honorable Hodan Hassan
Chair, Economic Development Finance, and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
597 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: H.F. No. 3028 and the “empowering enterprise program”

Dear Representative Hassan:

We, the 120 undersigned business owners, nonprofit leaders, and residents are writing to express our support for legislative funding that would bring critically needed investments to the Twin Cities and support the vibrancy of Minneapolis and St Paul’s economic and cultural business districts.

The civil unrest that unfolded following the murder of George Floyd has had a lasting effect and resulted in several hundreds of millions of dollars in damage across the Twin Cities. More than 1,500 businesses and nonprofits were fully or partially destroyed, many of them owned by immigrants, low-income entrepreneurs, and families who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).

Despite this profound loss, our communities have come together and worked tirelessly to rebuild, leveraging grants, forgivable loans, technical assistance, and other financial support made possible by private fundraising, corporate donations, and nonprofits. But much remains to be done, and we believe the State of Minnesota has a critical role to play.

The allocation of funding in H.F. No. 3028 and the “empowering enterprise program” would start to provide the necessary investments needed to implement local economic development programs and begin to make a significant intergenerational impact on historically diverse economic and cultural business districts, including Lake Street, West Broadway, Saint Paul’s Midway neighborhood.

In addition, we believe support of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue is still critically important and needs support from the State of Minnesota.

The funding provided by H.F. No. 3028 would support the Twin Cities’ continued recovery, supporting critical recovery tools like property acquisition, building preservation, strengthening business operations, business and safety improvements, area beautification, new development, and more.

As our communities continue to rebuild and recover from civil unrest, historic divestment, and institutional barriers, the funding from the State of Minnesota would make a powerful impact. We urge you and your colleagues to invest in our region’s economic growth and future success by passing this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



*Destination Northside
and Northside Economic
Opportunity Network*



Lake Street Council



*38th Street United coalition
with Sabathani Community
Center*



*Midway Chamber of
Commerce*

Chad Kulas, Midway Chamber of Commerce
Peter McLaughlin, Twin Cities LISC
Ann Kim, Vestalia Hospitality
Renay Dossman, Neighborhood Development Center
Walter Bonilla, Wells Fargo
Warren McLean, NEON
Mitra Jalali, City of Saint Paul - Ward 4

Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts
Ali Barbarawi, Chicago Lake Family Dental
Andrew Sybilrud, Bremer Bank
David Wellington, Wellington Management, Inc.
Ruhel Islam, Curry in a Hurry
Renee Spillum, Creative Enterprise Zone
Juan Linares, Cooperative Mercado Central Inc.

See reverse side for full list of signatures



Anna Wienke, We...Artist Collective, Studios, and Gallery
 Miluska Novota, Hortensia PLLC
 Josey Perez, Premier Health of South Minneapolis
 Justin Kirkeberg, Candid theater co
 Kendal Bergman, Resident
 Stacey Peacock, Stacey Peacock Consulting
 Jeff and Gita Zeitler, Urban Forage Winery and Cider House
 Daniel Goldschmidt, Etude LLC
 Sarah Goodspeed, Resident
 Barbara Jeanetta, Resident
 Karen Karen Lopez, Novedades Krystal
 Aaron Keith, Green Buidlers
 Wendy Knox, Frank Theatre
 Olivia Rodriguez, Zo Audio
 Kalan Knudson Davis, Dragon Papers Ink
 Ben Jacobson, Benj Jacobson
 Bree Sieplinga, Upstream Arts
 Doug Mork, Building Dignity & Respect Standards Council
 Andrea Kuenning, Resident
 Dianne Carlson, Resident
 Seth Prince, PrinceWorks, LLC
 Morgan Luzier, Balance Fitness Studio
 Renato Zagal, Renatos Restaurant Inc.
 Victoria Gonzalez, Manny's Tortas Llc
 Jeanette Vyhanek, Resident
 Amanda Madison, Bancroft Neighborhood Association
 Alice Reynolds, Over Under
 Leeann Sit, Resident
 Ryan Mulso, Joyce Preschool
 Brenna Everson, Brenna Everson Consulting LLC
 Timothy Jordan, North Star Mini Storage
 Nat Bennett, Resident
 Brad Turner, PPNA
 Jesus Escobar, Print & Buy LLC
 Veronica Murphy, Resident
 Chris Cinque, Resident
 Taylor Smrikarova, Redesign, Inc.
 Don Blyly, Uncle Hugo's Science Fiction Bookstore
 Pinkey Patel, Elite Cleaners
 Alembirhan Mezgebu
 Dominic Nzara, Dominci's Tax Service
 Karen Karen Lopez, Novedades Krystal
 James Garrett Jr., FAIA, NOMA, 4RM+ULA
 Linda McHale, Corner Store Vintage
 Emily Allgeyer, Resident
 Victoria Yepes, VY Management LLC
 Cody Oesterreich, Resident
 Jay Patel, International Management LLC
 Steven Budas, Resident
 Isadora Korak, Resident
 Andrew Sybilrud, Bremer Bank
 Daniel Swenson-Klatt, Butter Bakery Cafe GBC

Danii Lemaire, Resident
 Juno Choi, Arbeiter Brewing Company
 Katie Hosley, Resident
 William Weber, William Weber Consulting LLC
 Nicole Henry, Resident
 Tom Lubanovic, Frostbeard Studio
 Adeniyi Alabi, ADENAL Investment LLC
 Anisa Esse, Blue Horn Properties & Essential Health Services
 Conrad Leifur, Sooki and Mimi
 Emily O'Brien, Sooki & Mimi
 Rev. Ingrid Rasmussen, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
 Jackie Knight, Ackerberg
 Rachael Crew, Sooki & Mimi
 Monika D'Onofrio, Sooki & Mimi
 Julie Ingebretsen, Ingebretsen's Nordic Marketplace
 Jessica Bergman, Resident
 Becky Lemon, Sooki & Mimi
 Daniel Springrose, Sooki & Mimi
 Stephanie Bergholtz, Sooki & Mimi / Vestalia Hospitality
 Timothy Conners, Rotary
 Irene Kelly, Prisma, LLC
 Ellen Archibald, Resident
 Sarah Robinson, Resident
 Rachel Bouchard, Flourish Pilates+Bodywork
 Cara Carlson, Anam Cara Therapies, PLLC and Beechwood, Inc.
 Julia Holtemeyer, Resident
 Kali Pliego, Resident
 Chris Jones, Resident
 Zoe Martinez, Resident
 Lamberto Vergara, Minnesota School of Barbering
 Amanda Duerr, St. Paul Area Chamber
 Marcy McHenry, Midpointe Event Center
 Anthony Mendoza, Schindel Segal Mendoza, PLLC
 Kara Sime, Your HR Navigator
 Rev. Ingrid Rasmussen, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
 Thomas McInerney, Thomas J McInerney CPA
 Tetra Constantino, Elsa's House of Sleep
 Greg Sofie, Atlas Staffing Inc.
 Art Serotoff, Resident
 Victoria Lauing, Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center
 Julia Eagles, Resident
 Stephen Obayuwana, Construction Basics Inc.
 Adeyinka Badewa, eStoreMasters LLC dba United Developers
 Larry Olson, Metroplains
 Joan Phillips, Carondelet Event Center & Member of the
 Midway Chamber of Commerce
 Thomas Foss, Burning Brothers Brewing
 Catherine Day, Storyslives LLC
 May yer Thao, Hmong American Partnership
 Lauren Callis, Curiosity Studio
 Alexander Kado, Resident
 Thomas Mollner, Mollner Properties

Minnesota School of Barbering
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RE: H.F. No. 3028 and the “empowering enterprise program”

Dear Representative Hassan:

My name is Lamberto Vergara, and I am a business owner in the city of Minneapolis. I am writing today to express my request for Minnesota Legislature to spend a portion of its historic surplus on investing in the small business corridors damaged in civil unrest in 2020.

A bit of my background, I started my business journey over 12 years ago, in Minneapolis as a barber shop owner. I now own two barbershops (LV's Barber Shop), a barber supply store (Twin Cities Barber Supply) and a barber school (Minnesota School of Barbering). It has been a great experience having businesses in Minneapolis but also has come with a lot of hardships. As a small business owner during the pandemic it was a struggle to keep afloat but with the help of the community and state programs I was able to do so.

I have joined with many organizations to be able to move ahead with my dreams of being a business owner and I have contributed my time and donations to organizations such as; Lake Street Council, Latino Economic and Development Center, and Longfellow Business Association. These organizations are essential part of the success story of many small businesses. Without their support many of the Lake Street businesses would have vanished during the pandemic and the George Floyd civil unrest that took place in Minneapolis in 2020.

Businesses like mine are a staple to the community and they are what makes Lake Street so full of culture and diversity. I want to express my desire for the community to continue to flourish but in order to do so we need the support of our city officials, representatives, senators, mayors, and governor to fund the needs of the small businesses. The buildings in which we do business in Minneapolis are run down and have taking hits during the civil unrest. We need the funds to renovate and rebuild to attract more customers. Our businesses not only bring jobs to hundreds of people in the area but also service many of the customers in the community. We need the support of legislators to invest in small businesses to help replenish funding programs like the Acquisition & Predevelopment Fund, while also boosting many other initiatives for Lake Street's recovery.

I want to thank you for taking the time in reading my letter. I hope that my small impact can help encourage financial commitment from legislatives to support small businesses. This would serve as a significant way to begin the healing process of past systemic neglect by providing easier access to resources and stimulating long-term economic development.



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Elite Cleaners & Launderers
3101 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55406

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RE: H.F. No. 3028 and the “empowering enterprise program”

Dear Representative Hassan:

My name is Pinkey Patel and I am the owner of Elite Cleaners on Minnehaha Avenue right off Lake Street. We are the 3rd building from the 3rd Precinct police dept and we had suffered huge damages during the riots. Our building was totally burned from the inside and all my dry cleaning machinery was gone.

During this time we just had one support and that was Lake Street Council. They stood by us like a rock and helped us through those difficult times. We needed money to rebuild and they helped us with all the resources they had, without them we would not have rebuilt our business there again.

It was the funding from these non profits that helped us rebuild our business and also provided a sense of security and support, which was very important. Without these funds small businesses like ours would not have survived. We still need more help as we have not fully recovered and the process is ongoing. Supporting the involved organizations, gives small business like ours the opportunity to recover bit by bit. For this reason, it is imperative that the state legislature allocates funds to support small businesses.

Thank you to the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee and to Rep Hodan Hassan for reading my testimony.

Pinkey Patel
Owner, Elite Cleaners & Launderers

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Gandhi Mahal Restaurant
3009 27th Ave. S.
Mpls, MN 55406



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Dear Representative Hassan:

Gandhi Mahal Restaurant is the story of the power of community. Originally started by two brothers Ruhel Islam and Jamil Ahmed in 2008. We were chasing the American dream after immigrating from Bangladesh. The goal was to provide the community with healthy, affordable food that was rooted in generations-old family recipes. The motto we used was “dedicated to bringing peace by pleasing the palate.” We believed delicious food was the vehicle to bring all kinds of people together, to sit at the table of humanity, and get to know one another. Ruhel was often seen in the restaurant, serving food and talking with patrons about the peaceful principles of Mahatma Gandhi that guided Ruhel’s journey in life.

Over the years Gandhi Mahal Restaurant expanded to become a true community asset, not just a place to feed people. We built a space for children to play, a community room, and an aquaponics-aquaculture system in our basement, among other things. We have continually named the best Indian restaurant in the Twin Cities and were featured on the Food Channel. Our driving vision has always been “Fully Fed Communities.” We believe communities need to have healthy affordable food, quality education, dignified and affordable housing, and access to healthcare - all the things communities need to be taken care of physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In May 2020, when the civil uprising happened, we were in shock that a human could treat another so brutally. We were outraged and felt the people's anger. As the area descended into chaos we opened up our community room to those who were injured and it became a triage center with nurses and the injured. Eventually, the building burned down. Our work of breaking down barriers and promoting peace at that location was over in a flash but there are still many barriers of injustice and hatred that need to be dismantled.

Gandhi Mahal Restaurant was more than just a restaurant. It was a place where the community gathered and worked together to make our neighborhood a better place. We want to come back to this place that means so much to us. We want to build back better on Lake Street - to expand our redevelopment footprint to include affordable housing and truly free community gathering space. It will take several millions of dollars to rebuild and meet our multi-story mixed-use building goals. This vision is not able to come to fruition without funding from the State of Minnesota.

People of all backgrounds made a conscious decision to be the change they want to see in the world. Will you join us on that journey and commit resources to help our community heal and rise from the ashes? We encourage you to be the change.

Thank you to the Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee and to Rep Hodan Hassan for reading my testimony.