



March 14, 2022

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brook LaFloe and I am an Indigenous early childhood educator and advocate. I am a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and I also operate a social enterprise for Indigenous children- Niniijaanis One of Ones. I am fortunate to serve on the Community Solutions Advisory Council for the inaugural & impactful Community Solutions Grant Program. I am writing for my continued support and hopefully yours, towards HF 4099: Community Solutions Grant Program which is critical to addressing our state's early childhood opportunities. As Minnesota is great in educating its white students, it is also last in educating black and brown students which is evident as early as pre-K. We must do better so that people like me have equal opportunities and not just rare ones. I believe early childhood is the most practical place to close these opportunity gaps before they become larger gaps and end up leaving us with lower educational attainment rates and a workforce shortage in Minnesota. This is not a black or brown problem but ultimately a Minnesota one.

The Community Solutions Grant Program puts the power in the hands of our local communities to have the determination for the solutions that best fit their needs. Because Minnesota is extremely diverse, we must have a diversity of solutions, a diversity of voices, and a diversity of leaders, like the way we enjoy a diversity of geography, a diversity of foods and a diversity of opportunities. We must leverage the assets of diverse communities because assimilation and "one size fits all" policies have contributed to these growing disparities. It is time to increase the state's trust & investment in community solutions. The inaugural Community Solutions Fund supported 23 of 46 applicants that applied, with additional federal funding coming from the Preschool Development Grant, yet we still couldn't fully fund most of the grantees who were selected. The need is there, the time to make greater investments are now. I encourage your leadership to support the Community Solutions Grant Program with greater investments. Miigwech- thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brook LaFloe".

Brook LaFloe

Niniijaanis One of Ones Founder and Operator | [Ozhigin Fellow](#)

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