



February 23, 2022

Chair Ruth Richardson
House Education Policy Committee
Re: HF 3243, HF 3434, and HF 550

Chair Richardson and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage writes in strong support of HF 3243 (Davnie), HF 3434 (Frazier), and HF 550 (Jordan). We believe these three measures will help Minnesota take critical steps toward meeting the entrepreneurial, innovation, and skills needs of the twenty-first century.

Computer Science Education (HF 3243) – To close the racial opportunity gap in Minnesota's education system, our state must improve and increase resources that will help African heritage students succeed in rigorous coursework and post-secondary preparedness. Participation in STEM education and career development programs is essential to this goal. We commend the proposal to establish a Computer Science Education Task Force as a step toward statewide expansion of computer science education in Minnesota. Thanks to Rep. Davnie for bringing this bill forward.

- **We ask that you include provisions in the bill that would require BIPOC diversity in the Task Force membership.** The latter could include representatives from the state ethnic councils, local BIPOC community leaders whose work promotes computer science or STEM education, and/or local business, higher education, or industry professionals who self-identify as BIPOC and have expertise in computer science, engineering, or other STEM career fields.

Ethnic Studies Requirement (HF 3434) – The creation of an Ethnic Studies requirement will provide Minnesota students with the critical and ethical skills gained from instruction grounded in proven cross-cultural and interdisciplinary academic methods. The available research shows that culturally based pedagogical practices are beneficial to all students, including students of color. The opposite is also true: Social learning systems that exclude the histories and identities of marginalized groups are detrimental to all students, including students of color. We believe Ethnic Studies can help Minnesota address difficult issues of equity and pedagogy, while at the same time equipping all students with the knowledge to confront future economic challenges facing our state based on current demographic, environmental, and technological changes. We thank Rep. Frazier for bringing this bill forward.

Climate Justice Instruction (HF 550) – The proposal to require that Minnesota schools provide climate justice instruction is timely. This measure draws our attention to the potentially grave challenges and prospects facing future generations of Minnesotans. We commend the pedagogical focus, here, on the climate crisis as an ethical and social issue. If at the core of our climate and environmental challenges are matters of human action and conduct, then human creativity and innovation are important resources for addressing these issues. This proposal requiring climate justice instruction is an important education policy tool for cultivating those economic and intellectual human resources in Minnesota. We thank Rep. Jordan for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you for your leadership in statewide efforts to improve education institutions and outcomes in Minnesota. We look forward to working with your committee on these education policy measures.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Theodore Rose | Legislative and Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*