

February 12, 2023

Representative Liz Olson
Chair, Ways and Means
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Olson,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support for HF55 which will establish the Office of Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls.

For 40 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$45 million in organizations across the state, and advanced policies to create a state where women, girls, and their families can thrive. We listen to communities about the realities that women and girls face and advance policies that will support them. We have long funded work to make Minnesota a safer place for women and girls and have supported passage of important bills such as Minnesota's Safe Harbor Law, the Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, and the Missing and Murdered Black Women Task Force.

Our research with the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School, published last year, shows that gender-based violence, from sex-trafficking to domestic abuse, remains a significant problem in Minnesota. The impact is disproportionately on Black and Indigenous women, and women of color. Nationally, Black women have the highest rates of death due to homicide, followed by Native American women. In Minnesota, Black women are murdered at a rate 2.7 times higher than white women.

To find the solutions that will change systems so that more Black women and girls can be safe and well, we need to listen to those with lived experience. When we center their experiences and solutions, we can serve the families experiencing the greatest harm.

As a result of the leadership of the Missing and Murdered African American Women's Taskforce, and the work of the researchers, community members, department of public safety staff, and legislators, we know more about this epidemic in Minnesota than ever before.


The report issued by the Task Force provides thorough research, and, importantly, the stories of families, survivors, and communities who have been directly impacted by the violent death of a loved one or who are still searching for a loved one. The report's recommendations are grounded in their voices and experiences.

It could not be more important for Minnesota to take this step and establish an Office to support families, coordinate investigations, identify connections between trafficking and other

crimes, and ultimately, change systems to prevent this violence so that Black women and girls can thrive in Minnesota.

The Women's Foundation of Minnesota thanks Representative Richardson for her vision and persistent leadership on this issue, and we urge the legislature to move quickly to establish the office. There is no time to waste in making Minnesota a place that honors and respects the safety and whole lives of Black women and girls.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez

President & CEO

Women's Foundation of Minnesota