

May 4, 2021-SF 975

Dear Chairs Tomassoni, Bernardy, and Honorable Members of the Higher Education Conference Committee,

We appreciate the thoughtful work that went into both versions of SF 975 and for the inclusion of higher education proposals for the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA). These higher education proposals complement the E12 proposals needed to meaningfully increase the percentage of Teachers Of Color and American Indian Teachers (TOCAIT) to reflect our State's increasingly diverse student population and improve educational outcomes for all Minnesotans.

We applaud the increased investments for student teacher candidates who are of color and American Indian. Unpaid student teaching is among one of the most significant barriers to the profession for BIPOC candidates, and this investment will meaningfully enhance recruitment and retention of TOCAIT.

While neither version of SF 975 exactly mirrors the policies of ITCA, we appreciate the inclusion of important provisions for administration and reporting as proposed. Additionally, we appreciate both chambers leadership in establishing a grant program to fund the Come Teach in MN Program. This will incentivize quality out of state teachers to bring their talents and expertise to Minnesota. In a similar vein, the bicameral support for the Teacher Recruitment Marketing Campaign is very promising.

We encourage the Senate to reconsider their position in the creation of the Aspiring Minnesota Educators of Color Scholarship Program with policy language from ITCA, along with initial funding. SF 0975-3's proposed \$4.5 million investment over the biennium for these scholarships is far short of the \$26.4 million proposed for these scholarships in H.F. 1041. However, this appropriation will still support at least 200 candidates each year. Much stronger investments will be needed in future budgets if the state intends to increase the percentage of TOCAIT to representative levels, however the House language is a critical first step.

We thank you for the policies and the investments mentioned above and encourage leaders from both chambers to invest in a stronger Minnesota by establishing the Aspiring MN Teachers of Color Scholarship Program. Thank you for your leadership in forging an improved education system for all Minnesotans. Robust investments in education are critical to Minnesota's success across all sectors.

Sincerely,

Shannon Geshick | Executive Director | Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Rosa Tock | Executive Director | Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs

Sia Her | Executive Director | Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

Linda Sloan | Executive Director | Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage