



May 3, 2021

Honorable Governor Walz and Conferees,

Thank you for your leadership during these critical and challenging times.

As Minnesota's largest Latino-led community organization and 40 years of proficiency and community-service, we encourage you to consider a workforce funding approach that includes **both** competitive grants and direct appropriations for BIPOC nonprofits. We are writing to urge support for CLUES' appropriation for skills-building and wage-growth efforts.

CLUES is focused on reskilling, retraining, and increasing wages for low-income Latinos and immigrants. Lack of direct appropriations would end the successful momentum made possible by past Legislative investment in CLUES to bridge racial/ethnic gaps for participants' entry into skill-building workforce programs.

Direct appropriations enable CLUES to build a consistent delivery program without contractual gaps, funding uncertainties or application delays. Direct investment from the state allows us to tailor work-readiness solutions that meet local and individual needs, including covering the costs of student's tuition, uniforms, certification, etc. Direct appropriations have also helped CLUES expand workforce and wrap-around support services in Willmar, Austin, and in the metro area.

The increase for employment and workforce demand has been exacerbated since the beginning of the pandemic; we do not want to go backwards right as we are starting to come out. In 2016, the Legislature began making direct appropriations to BIPOC-led organizations because business as usual was not equitable, as evidenced by a census report showing Minnesota's nation-leading economic disparities for BIPOC populations. DEED is a valuable partner for competitive grants, but there is still a role for the Governor and the Legislature to improve wage disparities through direct investment in BIPOC-led organizations that have the trust and a proven track record.

We urge you to consider a funding approach that includes **both** competitive grants and direct appropriations.

Ruby Lee, President
CLUES