



**Greater Twin Cities
United Way**
gtcuw.org

March 12, 2024

Dear Vice Chair Clardy and the Members of the Education Finance Committee:

We write in support of HF 4500 to make permanent and expand scholarship program for aspiring teachers of color.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good, and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone. Together with our partners, we touched over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. We fund over 100 nonprofits and coalitions through grantmaking across our three impact areas of Educational Success, Household Stability and Economic Opportunity. We know access to quality education has significant influence on students' lifelong health, social and economic success. It is not dependent on the material taught, but also the educator.

In Minnesota, only 5.9% of our teacher workforce identifies as a person of color or Indigenous, whereas 36.7% of our students identify as students of color or Indigenous. A University of Maryland study reaffirms that teachers of color are linked to positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes and finds that these effects are driven, at least in part, by mindsets and practices aligned to what's known as "culturally responsive teaching."

These positive outcomes are more likely to occur when aspiring teachers of color have access to flexible scholarship funding that supports them while they complete state required in-class training, which is often low-paying or unpaid. This is important as financial challenges disproportionately impacts college students of color, and more likely juggling full-time employment while taking classes. Additionally, flexible scholarship funding allows them to pay for exam fees, tutors, and other preparatory materials without having to take additional year to complete course and certification requirements, resulting in increased student loan debt and time outside of the education workforce.

Greater Twin Cities United Way supports HF 4500 to build permanency and expand the scholarship program that will increase teacher workforce diversity, ultimately benefitting students across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephannie L. Lewis", written over a horizontal line.

Stephannie L. Lewis
Interim Director, Advocacy & External Engagement
Associate Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon Smith Jones", written in a cursive style.

Shannon Smith Jones
Senior Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way