



May 15, 2022

Chair Mohamud Noor
379 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Eric Pratt
3219 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Noor, Chair Pratt and Jobs Conference Committee Members:

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage writes to ask that you include provisions in the Jobs and Economic Development Omnibus (HF4355/SF4091) that prioritize investments in the economic growth structures of Black Minnesotans.

Amidst the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in our communities, Minnesotans of African heritage are disproportionately burdened by unemployment, low wages, and other structural economic challenges. Our Council believes that the economic security of Black Minnesotans can be served by policies that reinvest a portion of the economic product of our constituents back into the development of our communities. This means dedicating some of the annual output of the businesses and workers that self-identify as Africans and African Americans to help grow and sustain cultural, entrepreneurial, and organizational resource capacities within these communities, particularly in areas burdened by high poverty and underinvestment.

We recommend that your conference committee pass legislation that would increase public and private investments in the economic needs of Minnesotans of African heritage as a protected class within our civil rights laws. Such targeted, need-based legislation should include proposals that **(a) empower Black men, women, and youth to participate and thrive in high-growth industries and (b) provide increased financial and technical support to strengthen Black businesses and community infrastructures.**

Empower Participation in High-Growth Industries

Please ensure that the omnibus bill contains the following provisions:

1. **BIPOC Tech Jobs Pipeline for Youth** - Provide \$15M to endow Black students and youth with the knowledge, network, and technical resources to meet the demands of Minnesota's high-demand and high-earning tech industry.
2. **BIPOC Technology Re-Skilling Training for Adults** - Provide \$13M to enable Black men and women and other underrepresented populations to pursue and thrive in tech jobs and other higher-earning career pathways.

3. **Clean Tech Workforce Training Program** - Provide \$8M to train, retrain, and upskill BIPOC and other underserved workers in the transportation, weatherization, and energy efficiency industries.
4. **Equity in Apprenticeship** - Provide \$1.375M for the registered apprenticeship programs that train, reskill, and upskill the state's workforce, and ensure that this measure prioritizes participation and retention of people of African heritage and other disadvantaged persons.
5. **Local Workforce Development Boards** - Provide \$20M for local workforce development boards that deliver employment and training services and ensure that these local boards address the unique unemployment and underemployment needs of Black constituents.

Strengthen Black Economic and Social Infrastructures

Please ensure that the omnibus bill contains the following provisions:

- I. **Black Women Generational Wealth-Building Grant** - Invest in economic structures that increase the wealth-building capacity of Black women.
- II. **Emerging Developer Fund Program** - Establish a program to grow the finance capacity of Black developers and others from disadvantaged groups.
- III. **Main Street Economic Revitalization Program** - Increase funding designed to address the greatest community-based economic development and redevelopment needs that have arisen since March 15, 2020.
- IV. **Pandemic Relief Grant Program** - Dedicate \$35M for grants to small businesses facing financial hardship.
- V. **Spark Small Business Loan Program** - Dedicate \$45M for low interest or no-interest loans that incentivize job creation, private investment, and other economic development in underserved communities.
- VI. **Targeted Community Capital Project Grant Program** - Provide \$25M in grants for capital projects that deliver and expand services to underserved Black communities and other disadvantage groups.
- VII. **Women of Color Opportunity Act** - Establish grants to help girls and women of color start businesses, increase financial literacy, and participate in STEM careers.

Our Council believes the above proposals will help Minnesota address the unique economic challenges facing Black communities. Thank you for considering our recommendations.

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.*