

March 15, 2021

Capital Investment Committee
Chair, Representative Fue Lee
Vice Chair, Representative Mary Murphy
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Committee,

I'm writing in support of including the Asian American Center for Media and the Arts (AACMA) in the upcoming bonding bill. The existence of a center on the East Side of St. Paul that supports the creative work of Asian American artists will be a boon for the entire community. The AACMA will provide opportunities for artists to collaborate, perform, and increase their visibility within the Eastside neighborhoods as well as the entire metro. I believe it also has the potential to create additional economic development in this beautiful part of our city.

I became familiar with the work of FAWK (Funny Asian Women Kollektive) through Naomi Ko, one of its founders. I've had the honor of serving as a mentor to Naomi as she develops a social enterprise and I have seen firsthand her hard work and passionate belief in the importance of art and storytelling to build a more inclusive and robust society. As a filmmaker, Naomi knows well the importance of opportunity – the chance to work with and learn from other artists and to have access to the resources that make a creative idea come to life. The AACMA is an idea borne of experience, and its existence will improve the prospects for businesses rooted in creative enterprise. The opportunity to build the AACMA is the chance to recognize the community of Asian American artists that already call St. Paul home and to build a permanent institution that can nurture the work of all Asian American artists.

As a native Midwesterner of Irish and English ancestry, I can personally attest to how different mediums of art have connected me to experiences outside of my own and broadened my understanding of what it means to be an American. The last year of pandemic isolation has only emphasized the importance of art in connecting all of us to each other. We are fortunate to have a thriving Asian American community and a thriving art scene here in the Twin Cities. Let's seize the moment to bring the two together by creating a hub for Asian American art on the East Side.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connie Rutledge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "R".

Connie Rutledge

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