



## LETTER OF SUPPORT HF 55

January 9, 2023

Representative Kelly Moller, Chair  
Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee  
509 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

The Minnesota Public Health Association (MPHA) is writing in support of Minnesota House File 55 to establish and maintain an office within the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs dedicated to preventing and ending the targeting of Black women and girls.

MPHA is a volunteer-driven professional organization with 350 public health professional members throughout the State of Minnesota. Our mission is to create a healthier Minnesota through effective public health practice and engaged citizens. Our vision is to be an active, independent voice for public health in Minnesota.

According to a recent report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, Black women face high rates of intimate partner violence, rape, and homicide. Black girls and women also experience institutionalized racism; they are disproportionately punished in school, funneled into the criminal justice system after surviving physical or sexual abuse, disproportionately subjected to racial profiling and police brutality, and incarcerated at rates far exceeding their proportion in the general population.<sup>1</sup> The report further states that sexual violence affects Black women at high rates. More than 20 percent of Black women are raped during their lifetimes—a higher proportion than among all women overall. Black women also face a particularly high risk of being killed at the hands of a man. A study from the Violence Policy Center found that Black women were two and a half times more likely to be murdered by men than their White counterparts. More than nine in ten Black female victims knew their killers.<sup>2</sup>

The Minnesota Legislature, led by Rep. Ruth Richardson, developed the Missing and Murdered African American Women (MMAAW) Task Force during the 2021 legislative session to examine and report on a number of issues. The task force found that African American women and girls are subjected to high rates of kidnapping and abduction, sexual and domestic abuse, and sex trafficking due to a history of patriarchy and structural racism. African American women and girls are also almost three times more likely to be murdered than their white peers. Even though African American women

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<sup>1</sup> The Status of Black Women in the United States. Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1200 18th Street NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20036. <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-Status-of-Black-Women-6.26.17.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Violence Policy Center. <https://vpc.org/press/study-finds-black-women-murdered-by-men-are-nearly-always-killed-by-someone-they-know-most-commonly-with-a-gun-8/>



and girls comprise only seven percent of Minnesota’s population, they represent 40 percent of domestic violence victims.<sup>3</sup>

Violence against women is a significant public health problem, and MPHA agrees with the task force recommendations of addressing this important issue comprehensively, in part through establishing an office dedicated to preventing and ending the targeting of Black women and girls in Minnesota. The MMAAW Task Force recommended strategies are critical to begin to address this issue.

The Minnesota Public Health Association thanks the MMAAW Task Force for this critical work to address racial and health equity in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Saliars". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ellen" being more prominent than the last name "Saliars".

Ellen Saliars, MPHA President

Jaime Martinez, Erica Fishman, Austin Wu, MPHA Health Equity Committee Co-Chairs

Matt Flory, MPHA Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair

Submitted via email to:

Representative Ruth Richardson: [Rep.Ruth.Richardson@house.mn.gov](mailto:Rep.Ruth.Richardson@house.mn.gov),

[Samuel.ONeill@house.mn.gov](mailto:Samuel.ONeill@house.mn.gov)

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<sup>3</sup> Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force. Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs. *Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force Final Report*, December 2022.