

March 12, 2024

Representative Cheryl Youakim
Chair, House Education Finance Committee

Members, House Education Finance Committee

RE: HF 4500

Dear Chair Youakim and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

On behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters Twin Cities, I write in support of HF 4500. This bill will support increased scholarship funds for aspiring teachers of color, and increased funds for mentoring and retention programs for teachers of color.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Twin Cities (BBBS) is a mentorship organization that serves more than 2,200 young people each year who represent a diversity of backgrounds and identities. BBBS offers 1:1 mentorship in the community, school-based mentoring programs, career and future readiness for teens, and programs in partnership with many community-based organizations serving youth and families.

Over the past year, we gathered input from more than 700 stakeholders as part of our strategic planning process. One of the themes we heard over and over again is that representation matters – young people and their families are looking for mentors, community leaders, and teachers who reflect youth identities and lived experience.

BBBS supports HF 4500 because it is pivotal to the young people in our programs and to our mission as an organization that we create a community of adults who will affirm youth and amplify their voices. When young people see themselves in the adults supporting their growth, academic learning, and aspirations for the future, it leads to an increased sense of purpose, belonging, and self-esteem.

It is important that all young people in Minnesota, including young people of color, have this opportunity on their journey to adulthood.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sukhum
CEO, BBBS Twin Cities