

April 5, 2021

Chair Chamberlain and Honorable Members of the Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, and Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage have the important role as state agencies to advise and inform elected officials about our constituent communities and their needs. Our Councils provided a joint statement in February in support of the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act (S.F. 446), as this legislation has been the top education priority that has united our four Councils since the Increase Teachers of Color Act was first introduced in 2017 when the Senators Nelson and Anderson championed the bills.

We write to acknowledge with appreciation your leadership in the inclusion of several proposals in S.F. 446 in your omnibus bill, S.F. 960, including increased spending for several existing and new programs, given your smaller budget target as compared to the House Education Finance Committee. However, we also note with major concern that more of the important policy provisions and investments in S.F. 446 were not included in the DE Amendment for S.F. 960. While we appreciate that what you have proposed would be more than has been offered from the Senate since 2017, it is still not enough to “move the needle” to increase the percentage of teachers from our communities and thereby ensure that Minnesota’s teachers more closely reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the students they teach. Research has clearly demonstrated that all students benefit from a diverse educational workforce.

We urge you to find agreement with the House in conference committee negotiations to pass important policies that set a state goal, strengthen existing programs, and address persistent opportunity gaps to ensure maximum return on state investments. Additionally, we encourage you to recognize that more investments are needed to “move the needle” and begin the process of increasing the percentage of teachers from our communities that serve the needs of all Minnesota’s students.

Sincerely,

Shannon Geshick | Executive Director | Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Rosa Tock | Executive Director | Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs

Sia Her | Executive Director | Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

Linda Sloan | Executive Director | Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage