

February 21, 2021

Dear Members of the Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee,

Since 1922, the Minnesota PTA has supported parents, students, and educators across the state. We currently have 200 local units in Minnesota with 8,000 members representing all forms of schools, including rural, suburban, urban, district, and charter. Minnesota PTA is committed to working with legislators and toward our joint goal of improving family engagement opportunities throughout Minnesota and addressing the structural inequities that prevent parents from fully engaging to support their children's success in school.

Minnesota PTA supports the provisions and appropriations in the Increase Teachers of Color Act of 2021 that:

- Help all students to see themselves in their teachers by identifying and training more teachers of color for our classrooms and providing resources to retain these teachers;
- Reduce barriers to Minnesota teacher licensure to enhance a teacher workforce with more diverse backgrounds and experiences;
- Accelerate and prioritize school district actions toward making the teaching and learning content and culture in our schools culturally responsive, inclusive, and anti-racist, with a focus on social-emotional learning;
- Strengthen the role of parents and families – particularly those that represent diverse communities - in planning and improving curriculum and instruction and the Achievement and Integration plan;
- Shine a spotlight on the need for meaningful family engagement programs and strategies to be implemented into school district comprehensive plans;
- Support wearing of American Indian regalia, tribal regalia, and cultural objects by our American Indian students at their graduation.

A significant body of research connects strong family engagement in schools to student success. Increasing teachers of color and American Indian teachers in our schools benefits our parents and families just as much as it does our students. School-home communication and opportunities to build trust between the important adults in our children's lives will be enhanced when parents and family members who are of color or are American Indian can more closely identify with their children's teachers.

As Minnesota schools work to do better for our black students, students of color and American Indian students, opportunities for all families to share their experiences in their children's schools will inform the development of impactful proposals and programs. The reinforced language in this bill will remind districts that they must refocus their efforts to actively recruit parents and families from Minnesota's diverse communities to participate in district planning.

Thank you for your consideration and your support of this important legislation.

Heather Starks
President, Minnesota PTA

Cathy Nathan
Advocacy Commissioner, Minnesota PTA