



Lakes Country Service Cooperative

Jeremy Kovash, Executive Director

1001 E. Mount Faith - Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Phone: (218) 739-3273 - Fax: (218) 739-2459 - Web: www.lcsc.org

February 17, 2021

Senator Roger Chamberlain, Chair, & Members, Senate Education Policy & Finance Committee
Representative Ruth Richardson, Chair, & Members, House Education Policy Committee
Representative Jim Davnie, Chair, & Members, House Education Finance Committee

Re: Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA) – SF 446 / HF 217

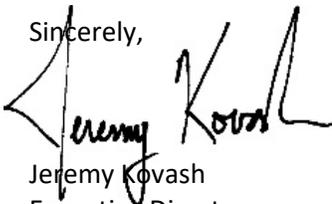
Respective Chairs & Members,

Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) serves the school districts in the nine counties of Economic Development Region 4 in west-central Minnesota. LCSC serves its members in a variety of different ways, one of the most recent being as an approved alternative teacher preparation provider offering additional licensure programs in career and technical education licensure areas such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and work-based learning.

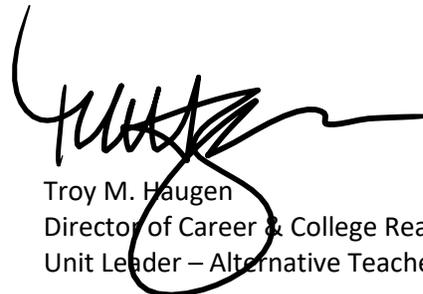
Economic Development Region 4's diversity in the teacher workforce is notably abysmal, mirroring the entire state of Minnesota. Over the past five academic years, the region's population of students of color has increased by over four percent, yet the increase in teachers of color over that same period of time is less than one half of one percent, mirroring the state's stagnant progress on racially diversifying the teacher workforce. With the almost certain likelihood of the trend of students of color increasing in our region and statewide, there is a great opportunity to increase teachers of color at the same time. Simultaneously, LCSC's teacher preparation programs are not initial licensure programs, therefore our program recruitment is limited to currently licensed Minnesota Tier 3 and Tier 4 teachers, of which 95.7 percent statewide are white and 98.9 percent in EDR4 are white. While this is a significant barrier, this does not provide an absolution for LCSC to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates. In fact, because of the scope and reach of our partnerships and our overall fundamental purpose, LCSC has a larger duty to the students of the region to serve in a broader context than just from the boundaries of teacher preparation.

There is clear a need to diversify the teacher workforce in Minnesota. The Increase Teachers of Color Act (SF 446/HF217) takes big steps forward in doing just that. By removing policy barriers and including state investments in teacher preparation, Minnesota can continue the path forward with these strategies to make schools more representative, and frankly better experiences for all students. Lakes Country Service Cooperative supports the Increase Teachers of Color Act as one of many important and necessary levers of change in this absolutely essential work. We strongly urge your support for the Increase Teachers of Color Act.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Kovash
Executive Director



Troy M. Haugen
Director of Career & College Readiness
Unit Leader – Alternative Teacher Preparation Unit

Service Cooperative Board of Directors

Chairperson Jon Karger, Pelican Rapids
Marc Hasbargen, Breckenridge
Supt. Dan Posthumus, Wheaton
Supt. Philip Jensen, Hawley

Vice Chairperson Suzanne Wing, Ashby
Kurt Mortenson, Otter Tail County
Judith Moeller, Parkers Prairie

Clerk Paul Ness, Battle Lake
Matt Lemke, Fergus Falls
Kevin Campbell, Clay County

Treasurer James Fish, City of Fergus Falls
Reed Reinbold, Henning
Andy Siira, Brandon-Evansville

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Serving the counties of: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wilkin