

February 3, 2021 Re: H.F. 217 Increase Teachers of Color Act

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: State Indian Affairs Council and Three MN Ethnic Councils

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. Students from our communities currently represent 35% of all students in schools across Minnesota. Moreover, our communities continue to endure a well-documented and widely reported disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in various economic, health, and education measures. Thankfully, comprehensive legislation in H.F. 217 has been developed over years to address racial disparities in education that have significant and compounding negative impacts on other sectors of society and the economy.

While our state's overall population continues to grow increasingly diverse, the severe shortage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers (TOCAIT) remains persistently stagnant. It is then with great urgency that we write today to ask that you support the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act (H.F. 217), which has been the top education priority that has united our four Councils since the Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA) was first introduced in 2017.

In 2016, state law and several statutes were amended to ensure that all students have "improved and equitable access to effective and diverse teachers" who reflect the diversity of students in their schools. Providing all students with equitable access to TOCAIT is something our state has yet to do in order to narrow our state's persistent opportunity and achievement gaps, which are among the worst in the country for our constituent communities.

As a state, we have yet to take the necessary systemic action to truly achieve improved results and narrow equity gaps, including addressing the persistent shortage of TOCAIT. Up to this time, we have only invested relatively small amounts in relatively few and small programs. While this approach has led to modest increases in the numbers of TOCAIT candidates and teachers, we have not yet addressed the problem systemically. As a result, the state has remained essentially flat in the percentage of TOCAIT in our schools.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you fully support the proposed strategic investments and important policies needed to ensure positive returns on the investments in H.F. 217. As a comprehensive package with the higher education bill for the Act, you have the opportunity to address systemic barriers to TOCAIT recruitment, preparation, and retention while also addressing factors that contribute to achievement gaps that deeply impact students from our communities.

The comprehensive set of policy proposals in H.F. 217 have been informed by feedback from hundreds of members and educators from our communities over the past five years and have been vetted and

endorsed by dozens of organizations that often do not agree on various educational issues. We have succeeded in partnership with the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota to gain bipartisan authorship of past ITCAs, and we are pleased that a bipartisan group of Senators have joined Senator Abeler in authoring the companion bill to H.F. 217.

We are encouraged by the emerging consensus among lawmakers from both parties in both chambers along with the Governor in recognizing that the severe and persistent shortage of TOCAIT is a problem that urgently needs to be addressed. We urge you to take this step to comprehensively address what is needed to “move the needle” and increase the percentage of TOCAIT each year so our students and families have improved and more equitable access to teachers who reflect their diversity. While we all eagerly anticipate the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the centuries-old pandemic of racial inequities will persist. This legislation takes meaningful action to resolve this legacy and offer opportunity to all students in Minnesota.

Together, despite the challenges of an uncertain and difficult budget climate, we believe you as leaders of both parties can create a budget that reflects a serious commitment to providing all students with equitable opportunities to succeed in school and life. Doing so must include full funding of H.F. 217. The proposed investments only represent 0.24% of all E12 spending in the current biennium, and 1% of all higher education spending.

Thank you for your leadership in doing what is right for the success of all students by fully supporting H.F. 217.

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



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

2 Pine Tree Drive, Suite 380, Arden Hills, Minnesota 55112

612-430-7750

info@amsd.org

January, 2021

To Members of the House and Senate Education Committees:

On behalf of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD) Board of Directors, I am writing in support of HF 217, a bill that would strengthen the Increase Teachers of Color Act. I also wish to express our thanks to Rep. Hassan for sponsoring this important legislation. Increasing the number of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers has been a longstanding priority for AMSD member school districts and is one of the top priorities identified on our [2021 Legislative Platform](#).

Diversifying our teacher workforce is also a key component of the [Reimagine Minnesota](#) collective action plan, an initiative of AMSD's superintendents. Reimagine Minnesota was launched by our superintendents in 2016 with the goal of ensuring that each and every student has access to an equitable and excellent education. From January through May of 2017, parents, students, cultural representatives, community members, business leaders and education stakeholders were invited to Reimagine Minnesota and conceptualize how our education system should be re-designed to ensure the success of each and every student.

The input received led to the creation of a collective action plan outlining nine key strategies:

- Develop, sustain and evaluate cultural competence for teachers
- Prioritize and ensure personalized education with an emphasis on acceleration vs. intervention
- Develop and implement culturally inclusive standards, curriculum and a comprehensive system of assessment
- Develop teacher preparation, recruitment and retention for staff of color
- Elevate student voice and leadership and improve/ensure inclusiveness in the school culture and environment
- Eliminate adult behaviors and policies that lead to disproportionality; provide growth-oriented student, staff and family support
- Build bridges between school and community
- Create and sustain consistent shared understanding of equity and high level of skill application for leaders at all levels
- Statewide funding that ensures equity, access and opportunity for all students

It has long been documented that the state is sorely lacking in the number of teachers of color. Research released just last week by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) noted in its [2021 Biennial Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand Report](#) “a staggering lack of teachers of color and indigenous teachers in all corners of the state.”

Specifically, the report notes less than 8 percent of all licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota self-identify as a teacher of color or indigenous. By comparison, more than 38 percent of the state’s students are students of color.

Research shows that diversifying the teacher workforce, increasing cultural competency and developing a culturally inclusive curriculum and school environment is critical to eliminating the opportunity gaps faced by students of color and Indigenous students. AMSD stands ready to work with state policymakers to advance this important legislation and work toward building an education system that ensures each and every student has access to an equitable and excellent education.

Sincerely,

Scott Croonquist
Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan School Districts

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Multiple Pathways to Teaching Office
Twin Cities Campus
College of Education and Human Development
www.cehd.umn.edu/graduate/mpt

U of MN Grow Your Own Teachers Program
Dual Language and Immersion Licensure Program

86 Pleasant Street SE
210 Wulling Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55455

January 27, 2021

Dear Members of House Education Finance Committee,

I am writing to share our strong support and endorsement of the Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA). The University of Minnesota Grow Your Own Teachers (MNGOT) program is a two-year, graduate-level teacher preparation program. It is centered around educational equity, school-based experiences, and a goal of increasing teachers of color through a “grow your own” recruitment strategy. Teacher candidates enrolled in the program are non-licensed district staff members in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul metropolitan area districts. In fall of 2021 we are expanding the program to Minnesota Reading Corps tutors in greater Minnesota.

For multiple years, our teacher candidates have benefited from the funding from the Minnesota legislature, including the Grow Your Own grant program and more recently the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant. The GYO grant program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Education and provides financial support for our teacher candidates via the districts where they are employed. The CUGMEC grant is administered by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board and has provided direct scholarship funding to our teacher candidates of color. The support is clearly appreciated:

Kyarra Edmond is a future teacher of color who works for the Minneapolis Public Schools as a Behavior Dean at South High School. She was born and raised in South Minneapolis. She is pursuing a K-6 elementary license and M.Ed. Kyarra wrote, “As a future academic scholar, I aspire to help marginalized students from various backgrounds reach their highest potential despite the adversity they may be challenged by. My passion is aiding in the process of closing the educational achievement gap and addressing disparities that children of color, and/or low-income students face educationally, targeting those who reside in poverty-stricken areas around the Twin Cities. I have dedicated my life, time, and resources to empowering students of color and those who reside in low-income areas in an effort to positively impact their lives. By awarding me this scholarship you have lightened my financial burden, thus allowing me to focus on the most important aspect of school: learning.”

Antonio Caudillo is a Spanish Community Liaison in the Bloomington Public Schools and is a future teacher of color. He has been in his position for 2 years and is pursuing a K-12 ESL license and M.Ed. Antonio wrote, “In my case, some of the struggles that Latino students go through with regards to English language acquisition, making do with limited resources, and navigating an educational system that their families might not be familiar with are struggles and obstacles I myself had to face when my family and I immigrated to this country in the fall of 2003.” He is grateful for the scholarship support.

DeMonte’ Baker is a first year teacher at Wilshire Park Elementary. He is pursuing a K-6 license and M.Ed.. He wrote, “I have the pleasure of receiving one of your academic donations. I would personally like to thank you for your contribution to my education. Receiving a Master’s from an institution like the University of Minnesota has always been a dream of mine. However, due to the expense I never thought it would be possible.”

Lighter Moo is a bilingual paraprofessional in the Saint Paul Public Schools. He speaks both Karen and English. He is pursuing a K-12 ESL license and M. Ed. He wrote, "I used to be an ESL student and I realize I can make a difference in my community. Working as an Educational Assistant for the past five years, I have learned a lot in the process of working with teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. I have learned that if I were to make a difference in the lives of many students, I need to step up and be a leader. And I believe that I can achieve this through the MNGOT program. After receiving my ESL teaching license, I plan to teach in Saint Paul Public Schools where I used to work as an Educational Assistant for many years. Thanks again for your generous support of my education."

There is a significantly greater need than there is funding for both the GYO and CUGMEC funds in Minnesota. There is a great interest in the Grow Your Own programs to serve adults who are working in districts. The increase in funding and expansion of Grow Your Own efforts would have a tremendous impact on the lives of individuals and on the bigger goal of increasing the diversity of our teachers in Minnesota. The increase in funding for these programs, in addition to the other important elements in the Increase Teachers of Color Act are initiatives that we strongly support. Since 2015, we have prepared over 75 teachers of color and our cohorts average over 50% teachers of color. The need is so urgent in our state and more funding is vital to provide the crucial scholarships and funding to support our future teachers of color. Thank you for your consideration and support!

Sincerely,



Laura Mogelson (mogelson@umn.edu), Director, Multiple Pathways to Teaching, CEHD, UMN-TC

February 2, 2021

To Members of the Committee:

In 2013 Somali community leaders reported a great need for Somali teachers for their children. Across a busy legislative session, Representative Davnie and others met with Somali community leaders and government colleagues. Together, they identified Augsburg University, with its small size and location, as a *good bet* for a program for future teachers of East African descent.

It was a good bet.

My name is Audrey Lensmire. I am an associate professor of education and founding director of Augsburg's state funded East African Student to Teacher Program (EAST). We have been good stewards of the state's generous funding since 2013. We have carefully accounted for each dollar we have spent on tuition scholarships, student teaching cost of living stipends, testing fees and tutoring. People of East African descent who are accepted into our selective program are highly likely to complete their coursework, obtain a Tier 3 license, and be hired and retained as licensed teachers.

EAST is still a good bet.

The EAST program was created in response to local community needs. EAST is slowly but surely contributing to more teachers of color and multilingual teachers in the state of Minnesota. We thank the legislature for continuing to invest in the worlds-best *teaching* workforce. We hope you will continue to support the CUE-CUGMEC fund as part of a much broader set of equity initiatives.

With kind regards,

Audrey Lensmire

Audrey Lensmire, PhD
EAST program founding director
lensmire@augsborg.edu

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 2/1/21 HF 217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Annie Hansen-Burke, PhD, LP
Affiliation: Minnesota Collective for Educational Equity, Parent
City of Residence: Robbinsdale

Thank you for taking the time to review my testimony. I am testifying in support of the HF217 – the Increase Teachers of Color Act. I identify as a white person, and am also a parent, a psychologist and an educator. My testimony is influenced by each of these identities. Education as a system has a legacy of teaching better to some students than to others. We need to take a stand and act as leaders in our great state to dismantle the oppressive elements of our system so that each and every student has access to high quality, anti-racist, and equity-driven education. The language in this bill promotes a more authentic and representative teaching force, as well as strengthened expectations for our core curriculum. This is not an add-on, rather, it is a course correction to support our schools in truly cultivating the world’s best workforce and promoting success for each and every Minnesota student. I urge you to support this important and timely bill.

*Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf
(optical character recognition)*

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February, 3rd, 2021 (HF217)

To: Members of Education Finance Committee

From: Jessica Davis, Minnesota Teacher of the Year, 2019

Affiliation: Mathematics Teacher/Racial Equity Instructional Coach

City of Residence: Minneapolis

I am grateful to have another opportunity to confront the vast inequities in Minnesota's public education and submit written testimony on behalf of the Increase Teachers of Color Act, HF217.

I began teaching High School Mathematics in 2006, and it was during my time at South St. Paul's Secondary that I was honored as Minnesota's Teacher of the Year for 2019/2020. I am a Minnesota native, the daughter of educators, a graduate of public school, hold a bachelor and Master's degrees from two of Minnesota's finest institutions, and yet as a bi-racial, black and white female in the field of STEM, I have never had a teacher who looked like me.

I've thought a lot about that over this last year.

I believe that the student and teacher experiences are connected, and that we as teachers are not only responsible for educating future adults, but nurturing a love for learning that inspires the next generation of educators.

Given our current realities, I wonder, have we done this? Why or why not? What are we willing to change in order to re-center the margins and bring life to the lip-service? How do we hold one another accountable so that the heavy lifting of this work is not laid solely at the feet of the teachers of color - but where excellence is demanded of everyone and mediocrity is acceptable for no one? What comes up for you when you read these wonders? I believe it's important we make space to address our personal hesitations as the work starts within. We must be willing to confront our own biases in order to understand how systems of oppression have been preserved and perpetuated.

During my own struggle through distance learning last spring I began to question how I personally have contributed to a system centered in whiteness, or exacerbated inequities, and even prioritized completion over critical consciousness and cultural competency.

By the time my south Minneapolis neighborhood was in flames last summer, I confess, the majority of my time was no longer focused on mathematics or essential standards, but spent with my students processing what they were living.

I listened to my students' fears and frustrations, and offered kinship through my own experience as a student, near their own ages, during the Rodney King trial of the 90s. It was then one of my

dear kids looked straight into my soul and wondered, “If you’ve been through this before, then why didn’t you do something?”

It was at that moment that I realized that I was unwilling to normalize for my students the tokenization I was experiencing as the only black teacher in a district for almost a decade. My exhaustion was not their burden to carry.

So I resigned. And there is now one less teacher of color in the classroom.

That burden is on all of us; namely, the adults who have lived through it and know better. It is on us to disrupt the systems of status quo - to **invest** in practices that not only *recruit* but *retain* staff that represent the diverse student population. But most of all, it is on us to demand that all teachers are qualified to meet the unique needs of our student populations - including the white staff.

Intersections of oppression may not yet be quantifiable, but the impact is exponential. I was physically reminded of the ways my brown body keeps score when just a week after my decision to leave the classroom I was diagnosed with cancer. Once again I considered what my students were witnessing, and what they would infer and carry with them about what it means to be black/brown/indigenous in America.

We must agree that the work of creating anti-racist, equitable learning experiences for all kids is not about checking a box, nor an optional practice that one can opt out. It will take all of us individually unpacking our own truths in how we got here, and collectively grappling with the discomfort that comes with our students asking us, “Why haven’t we done something about it?”

I now serve as a Racial Equity Instructional Coach in St. Louis Park Schools supporting other teachers at building their own capacity to grow as critically conscious and culturally relevant educators. I am learning that implementing strategies which validate, affirm, embrace and integrate culture and community strengths cannot be done in isolation or alone, nor can it be left to the bodies of color. I have witnessed the power of protocol and common language that names the practices that institutionalize racism in our schools. But most importantly, I have heard our students confirm that they want teachers who want to do this work.

The student leaders I’ve been able to work with this year have reminded me that they (and history) are always watching, and we (adults) are always teaching regardless of classroom or title. Our kids are consuming the actions taking place at our buildings of government, and listening to the words of our elected officials. It is on us to remain mindful that how we model our priorities now determines whether these students grow up to scale the walls of our capitol building or give truth to power through poetry inside of it at historical inaugurations.

We've done the research. We have the data. And I believe we have exhausted the conversation. So I wonder, what will it take for this to be our last generation of kids who asks of the adults, "Why didn't you do something about it?"

Indeed.

Thank you for your time.

February 2, 2021

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

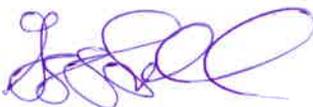
As a high school principal, I know that how we set our budget speaks volumes about our priorities as a district. The same can be said of our state budget. In 2019, I wrote in support of fully funding the Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA). While we have seen some incremental increases, the funds currently allocated fall woefully short of what is needed for measurable systemic change. What does this say about our true priorities?

Once again, I strongly urge this committee to fully fund the Increase Teachers of Color Act. The act, in its entirety, is a comprehensive series of proposals that add up to the most modest annual increase in teachers of color and American Indian teachers statewide. If you underfund any of the provisions in this act you are prioritizing the status quo.

For schools in my region, the grants for Grow Your Own programs would encourage and support our pursuit of American Indian teachers in a way that more proportionately reflects our student population. The world's best workforce strategies supported in the newly proposed Equitable School Enhancement grants would allow schools like mine to devote resources necessary to close the opportunity and achievement gap of our American Indian students.

For schools statewide, the ITCA incentivizes increased collaboration among urban and rural Minnesota schools, it subsidizes the programs needed for authentic change, and it prioritizes action. If positively impacting the racial and social landscape of our American Indian students and students of color truly is a priority we share, we must fully fund the Increased Teachers of Color Act.

Respectfully submitted,



Gregg Campbell
Principal
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January 27, 2021

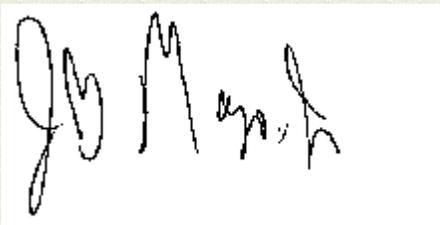
Dear Members of House and Senate Education and Higher Education Committees,

In my capacity as Associate Chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and faculty lead of the Teacher-Scholars of Color (TSoC) initiative, I write offering my strong support and endorsement of the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA). Each year, our department supports hundreds of teacher candidates across a wide range of academic program areas along their path to licensure. We make our best efforts to recruit, retain, and matriculate teachers of color across all program areas through our TSoC initiative and believe the Increase Teachers of Color Act will provide a great opportunity to address and remove barriers that consistently suppress the number of teachers of color in Minnesota classrooms.

The disparity between the number of students of color in classrooms across Minnesota (approximately 34%) as compared to the number of teachers of color (about 5%) is well-documented and has persisted for many years. While the percentage of students of color continues to rise, the percentage of teachers of color remains stagnate. Meanwhile, Minnesota has one of the largest racial and ethnic achievement gaps in the United States, and research indicates that an increased number of teachers of color leads to positive academic outcomes for students of color, including higher academic achievement, increased graduation rates, and higher likelihood of attending college.

I urge you to support the 2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act. The need is dire and our students of color and the communities that support them have waited long enough. Our students of color deserve better and this Act will move us in a positive direction toward educational equity for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.B. Mayo, Jr.", is centered below the text "Sincerely,".

J.B. Mayo, Jr., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Associate Department Chair
Faculty Lead, Teacher-Scholars of Color
Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: HF 217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Jessie Kember
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): U of M
City of Residence: Crystal, MN

To members of the Education Finance Committee,

I am writing to you in full support of HF 217: Increase Teachers of Color Act. With an increasingly diversifying student body in the state of Minnesota, representation of non-white individuals across our teaching staff has remained stagnant, contributing to a widening gap in representation between educators, and students served. During a time in which we are experiencing a dual pandemic – one dictated by COVID-19, and the other now known by many as “America’s Racial Reckoning” – we need to begin to dismantle the many oppressive characteristics of our education system. This starts with our white educators committing to a lifelong journey towards an anti-racist identity, as well as systemic changes, including shifting the training provided to future educators, changes in our hiring practices, and efforts to build and maintain a safe educational environment for all (including our BIPOC educators).

Thank you for your consideration,

Jessie Kember

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Jessie Kember, Ph.D., LP, NCSP
Lecturer | School Psychology Program | University of Minnesota
Visit my virtual office
Schedule an appointment
She/Her/Hers
Black Lives Matter

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: HF 217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Daniel Knewitz

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Educator (University of Minnesota;
Minnesota Collective for Educational Equity)

City of Residence: Minneapolis

Members of the Education Finance Committee,

My name is Daniel Knewitz; I am an educator presently working at the Center for Applied Research & Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota. I also work with a grassroots organization, the Minnesota Collective for Educational Equity (MnCEE). I am writing to voice my strong support for HF 217 – the Increase Teachers of Color Act.

The severity of our educational inequities in Minnesota is a crisis. The moral debt we have accumulated is growing through each year of inaction. I know that the Increase Teachers of Color Act would be a meaningful step forward in addressing this crisis. Research demonstrates that students of color do well when they have educators who represent their identities. Even further, when students of color do well, white students benefit as well. The deficits we face require sweeping, systemic action. Pursuing the Increase Teachers of Color Act must be part of that action.

Respectfully,

Daniel Knewitz

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dan.knewitz@gmail.com

(847)224-2852

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Dr. Rhonda Bonnsetter, President
rhonda.bonnsetter@smsu.edu 507-227-1459

Krista Overby, Executive Assistant
and02975@umn.edu 952-715-1257

To whom it may concern:

The Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE) Executive Committee endorses and is proud to be a sponsor for the Increasing Teachers of Color Act 2021 (ITCA 2021). While we work to recruit and prepare new teachers for Minnesota schools, we often hear from PreK-12 students who have never had the opportunity to learn from a teacher of color. In addition, when MACTE members work to place diverse student teachers in school settings, our institutions struggle to find settings where the individual is not the only teacher of color in the building. This is a disservice to all students and future teachers. Therefore, MACTE is supportive of the three goals for the ITCA 2021:

1. Attract and prepare more teachers of color and Native American teachers
2. Increase program completion for teachers of color and Native American teachers
3. Increase retention for teachers of color and Native American teachers during their first years of teaching

MACTE is specifically supportive funding and policy language for these elements of ITCA 2021:

- Equitable school enhancement grant funding
- Creating state goals to increase teachers of color and Native American teachers, including an Outcomes Assessment Report
- Curriculum Policy to prohibit discrimination or discipline for educating about persons from protected classes
- State Model Policy requiring MDE develop resources for creating positive school climates to reduce discrimination
- Changes in Licensure rules and testing to remove barriers for teachers of color and Native American teachers
- Changes to the Collaborative Urban and Greater MN Educators of Color grant program
- Grants for Grow Your Own programs
- Teacher mentorship and retention grants
- Changes to principal evaluation to include culturally responsive skills and practices
- Funding an Aspiring MN Teachers of Color Scholarship Program
- Amendments to the Student Teacher Candidate Grants
- Funding the Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness program

MACTE Executive Committee members:

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Dr. Cari Maguire, president-elect

Prof. Athena Novack – treasurer, private universities representative

Dr. Kristin Conrad – private universities representative

Dr. Kyena Cornelius – MinnState representative

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Dr. Christopher W. Johnson – University of MN representative

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Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021 HF 217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Cathy Nathan, Advocacy Commissioner and Heather Starks, President

Affiliation: Minnesota PTA

City of Residence: Rochester, MN and Bloomington, MN

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.



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mnpta@mnpta.org

February 2, 2021

Dear House Education Finance Committee Members,

The Minnesota Private College Council strongly supports HF 217, the 2021 Increasing Teachers of Color Act. Since the 1990's our member institutions have demonstrated their commitment to diversifying the teacher workforce.

Statewide 307 bachelor's degrees and 321 master's degrees in education were earned by students of color and Native American students in 2018-2019. That's only 12% of bachelor's and master's degrees in education. Looking at students of color and Native American students who earned education degrees in 2018-2019, 22% of those who earned bachelor's degrees and 55% of those who earned master's degrees did so at Council member institutions. But we know this is not enough. We need to increase the number of students of color and Native American students enrolled in education programs.

HF 217 provides the necessary state investment to strengthen existing programs which are proven to recruit, license and retain teachers of color. The success of programs like Grow Your Own, the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators Grant and the Teacher Mentorship Program will not continue or expand to more partners without increased investment. Our colleges are critical partners in this work and want to do more. A joint partnership with the State will bring about a path to our shared goal – diversifying the teaching workforce.

We are pleased to endorse this legislation and ask you to support the Increasing Teachers of Color Act.

Sincerely,



Paul Cerkenik
President

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Irene
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

My name is Irene and I go to South High in Minneapolis. From high five to to 3rd grade I had hispanic, spanish fluent teachers. I grew up in a mexican household where I was taught to embrace my culture. In school I was taught to read, write, and speak fluently in spanish in every aspect. In those grade levels I admired those teachers because I thought they were like me, I could talk to them whenever I had a struggle understanding something, they would talk to me in spanish which is my first language and I felt as if they were family to me because those conversations felt so normal to have. As a little kid seeing my parents adapt to this american society, learning how to speak english, working everyday to have a roof over our head and a meal on the table would inspire me to go everyday and learn about where i'm from, to get good grades, and having those teachers by my side supporting all of my steps they helped me to grow a desire to learn in school, to become efficient in what I am growing to learn more about everyday to this day. However, since 3rd grade I haven't had any teachers of color. I would like to be able to have teachers that look like me and can understand my culture.

Sincerely, Irene

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Filsan
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

Hi My name is Filsan.

i am from south high school and I am in ninth grade.

I support teachers of color to be increased and we can have students who can learn in peace and not be scared to speak. We want people of color to be known and to be respected. We want students to be treated like the other white kids and don't let them feel different from others. We want students to feel comfortable to the color of their skin. Thank you for supporting this Act.

Filsan

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Nabiil
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,
Hi, My Name is Nabiil Sahal and I am a freshman at South High School in Minneapolis. I think Ethnic Studies is important because I for one would like to know my ethnic background. I also think other students of color would like to know their background, Where they came from, how it feels to be a student of color in the USA, and ETC. If we have an Ethnic Studies class we as in the students color would be able to learn How to embrace our Black Power.

Thank You, Nabiil.

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Jairo
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

Hi,my name is Jairo and I am a 9th grade south high student. I think we need more teachers of color and american indian teachers because students could feel more comfortable. People could also be more free to speak with somebody that they think will understand them. I also think having more teachers of color would motivate students to try harder so that they too could reach their dreams.

Thank you, Jairo

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Hamze Mursal
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Representative Davnie,

My name is Hamze Mursal and I go to South high school in Minneapolis. There have been a lot of things lately that have been happening to the colored community and the people of those communities all they want is to fix the broken system and help people know that everyone should be treated the same. also

how teachers' colors affect me was by they know what happens to us because they probably went through the same thing and then they are there to help us fix our problems in a good way and make us feel comfortable so we won't have to overthink of us getting judged.

HM

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Joseph

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): student

City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

I attend South high School and I identify as a white male. For most of my life I had primarily white teachers but in 5th grade I had a teacher of color and he had a great impact on me. I learned a lot from him, and I think other kids should be able to have that experience of learning from a teacher of color like I did. We need more teachers of color in our schools.

From
Joseph

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Samsam

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): student

City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

Hello, my name is Samsam Qadiid & I am a freshman at South High School in Minneapolis. I think Ethnic studies would have a huge impact on students because Teachers of color boost academic performances of students of color. In my opinion, teachers of color would make students feel more comfortable in class and not be afraid of speaking what's on your mind.

Sincerely,
samsam

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Ayaan
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student
City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Representative Davnie,

my name is Ayaan and I go to South High School and I support this act and I think people of color should be given the opportunity to be represented more because in school is mostly white teachers and I think a lot of people don't know what their ethnic backgrounds and I know they would be so happy to know about their ethnic backgrounds and history and I feel that this topic is important I feel that this country should be equally diverse and we should represent other people and not just white people we only learn about American history I feel like we should learn about other people's history and it's crazy to some people how they never had a person of color be their teacher and it's disappointing to me and other people as well and I feel like we should completely put into social studies cuz it's just about white it's not Asians history African history latina history and I feel a lot of people want a change because a lot of people don't like social studies and they would be happy to have ethnic studies

sincerely, Ayaan

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Hannah
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student
City of Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Dear Representative Davnie,

Hi, my name is Hannah and I am a south high student in Minneapolis. I had the opportunity to go to a chinese immersion school in forest lake called LILA, Lakes International Language Academy. Most of the school offered chinese but there were two classes of spanish for each grade. From kindergarten to fourth grade I learned about the chinese culture and the teachers treated me like I was part of their family. Ever since I left I have seen less and less diversity and I think it's important that everyone should get the opportunity to learn about different cultures. We become more knowledgeable but also have the opportunity to teach others.

Thank you,
Hannah :)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From:

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Hi my name is Stephanie and I am a South High student in Minneapolis. I think Ethnic Studies is important because most of the schools have many students of color. It is also important for students of color to learn more about their culture and history of where they come from. Another thing that is also important is having more teachers of color because if there are more teachers of color students would feel a bit more comfortable with them. I think we need more teachers of color so that we have somebody we can relate to.

Thank you, Stephanie

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Nawal

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Dear Representative Davnie,

I am a South High student. I think that we should have more teachers of color because all the time I have been in school I haven't had one teacher of color or anyone who looks anything like me. As a black muslim girl who has always been surrounded by white teachers and mostly white students school has been a place where I didn't really enjoy and somewhere I felt so out of place off. However if I had a teacher that looked like me or had a counselor that was muslim I would have felt more comfortable to talk to them, but there wasn't anyone like that so I just ended up hating school. So in other words, if future students especially students of color had more color teachers they would feel so much better being in school. Those teachers would impact their students' confidence in what they can do in their future and confidence in themselves. Also they could help them better understand their history.

Thank you,

Nawal

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Ashley

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Dear Representative Davnie,

My name is Ashley and I am a student here at South high school. I think ethnic studies is important because it lets us students examine their race, ethnicity, culture, background and what's occurring now, and why it is happening. I identify myself as a colored Hispanic girl here in the US but in all my elementary school years I only had white teachers until 6th grade. For me and any student will feel more comfortable / more open if they had more teachers of color around their school. I kinda feel disappointed to not see as many teachers of color in our schools I think if we have more teachers of color it will motivate more students to try their best at school as they have a person to talk to and be themselves too. I feel like if students of color walk around a school with only white teachers around them they would feel like they are not connected/not part of the school community because they will only see one type of race. These are my reasons why I think ethnic studies is not only important to me but to many other students.

Sincerely,
Ashley



Independent School District 625
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

Telephone: (651) 767-8149 Fax: (651) 290-8331

Date: February 2, 2021
To: Education Finance Committee Members
From: Mary Dougherty Gilbert, Saint Paul Public Schools Legislative Liaison
Re: HF 217

On behalf of the St. Paul Public Schools Board of education and St. Paul school community, I am writing in support of HF217. Recruiting and retaining teachers of color has been a priority of the district. We are currently recruiting our 6th cohort of candidates from district staff, mentors or fellows working with our students the St. Paul Urban Teacher Residency (SUTR) program. This unique partnership with the University of St. Thomas (UST) provides a high quality pathway for pursuing a Minnesota teaching licensing and master's degree in Licensed elementary and ABS (Special education), Math grades 5-12 beginning in 2020 and Middle school Science beginning in 2021.

SPPS chose the residency model after thorough research as the intensive cohort model pairing residents with master teachers for a 4 day per week year-long student teacher experience, demonstrated that students had better outcomes and retention for residents was higher than traditional teacher programs. SPPS pays residents a stipend, covers health insurance, and offsets instructional materials. UST works with students to access grants, scholarships and financial aid and loan forgiveness. Yet, many residents suffer some financial hardship to enter the program.

Currently we have 88 graduates working at St. Paul with over 63% teachers of color in the last three cohorts serving high need licensed areas. The retention rate is also 11% higher compared to district wide retention of novice teachers. Teachers of color or Indigenous teachers now comprise 20% of our staff.

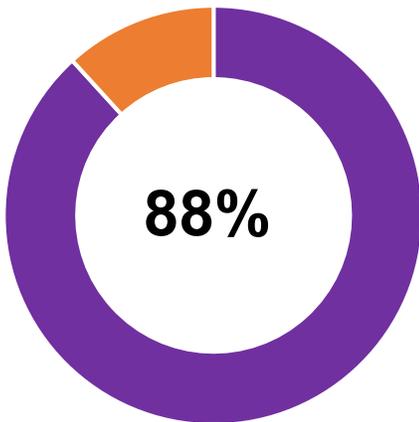
We are especially excited about our current undertaking with UST to develop a "grow your own" program for our high school students of color and Indigenous students, maximizing college in the school (CIS) opportunities while in high school, then moving to the Dougherty school at UST, with completion of their bachelor's degree in the teacher education program designed for students teaching in St. Paul upon graduation. The added "grow your own" opportunities in the bill along with the teacher mentoring are very exciting and necessary to continue to recruit and retain TOCI professionals.

The Saint Paul Urban Teacher Residency is an innovative program designed to recruit, prepare, support, and retain effective teachers from underrepresented backgrounds. Residents complete a 15-month program including intensive coursework at the University of St. Thomas and a co-teaching placement with an experienced mentor teacher during the academic year. At the conclusion of the program, residents begin teaching in Saint Paul Public Schools with access to intensive induction support.

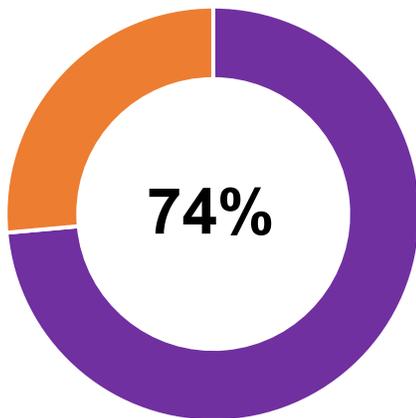
88

Graduates of Cohorts 1–4 hired by SPPS to date (SY 2016–SY 2020)

Program Completion Rate

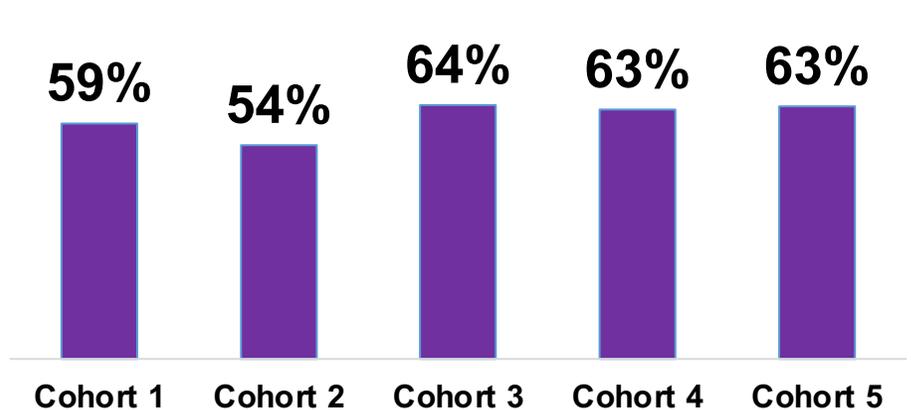


Retention Rate



Residents in Cohort 5 are completing the program remotely due to COVID-19.

■ **Percent people of color**

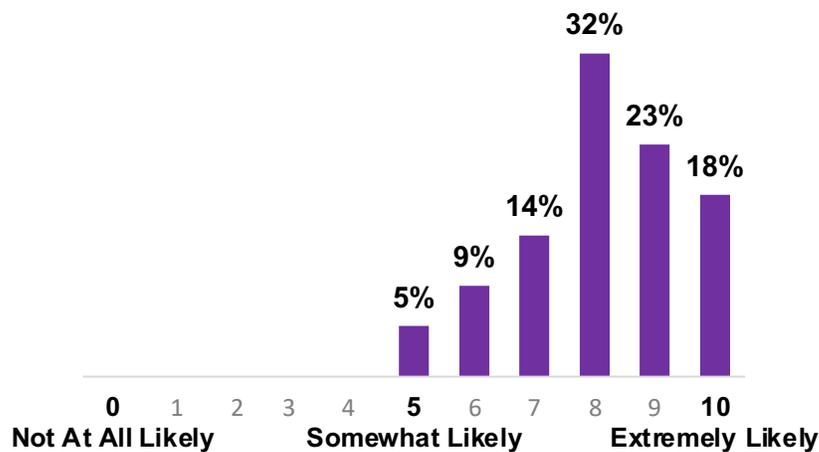


SUTR retention is 74%. By comparison, District retention for novice teachers is 63% overall, 59% for teachers of color and 56% for teachers of color in special education.

SUTR residents are intentionally paired with an experienced mentor teacher to guide, support, and coach them on best practices. Many mentors report that the experience helps them improve their own teaching practice as well.

“Having a resident has opened up my mind to new ideas and different ways to do things that strengthen my teaching in a positive way.” -SUTR Mentor Teacher

“How likely are you to recommend becoming a mentor to fellow teachers?”



“Being a residency program mentor makes me a more effective teacher”



Source for both graphs: National Center for Teacher Residencies midyear survey from the 2019-2020 school year.

Program Highlights

- Tuition: \$23,290, with multiple scholarship opportunities available
- Stipend: \$26,000 for each resident, provided by SPPS
- District-sponsored health benefits
- District-sponsored textbooks
- District-sponsored multi-tiered induction support for residency graduates
- Program supported by TQP, MDE grant and SPPS district funds

Partners of the SUTR program:

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 2/2/2021 HF 217
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Kristina Snyder
Affiliation: parent, educator, MnCEE member
City of Residence: Rochester

Hello. I am writing this letter as an active testimony to advocate for changes to policies that will benefit our marginalized and minority groups. As a graduate student at Minnesota State University Moorhead, I researched rural Minnesotan, Native American students' post high school aspirations. Through qualitative research, I found that students aspired to careers of those they saw frequently in their community (e.g. police officer and teacher).

I can only imagine the impact for students to see teachers of color or Native American teachers in their schools. The hope to send the message that you can aspire to be anything is often met with many racial obstacles. An antiracial policy that focuses on the increase of teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota is moving our students toward equal opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration as we move forward in promoting policy changes for equity.

Respectfully,
Kristina N Snyder, Psy.S., NCSP

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021; HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Deb Henton, Denise Dittrich

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): MN Association of School Administrators, MN School Boards Association

City of Residence: N/A

The MN Association of School Administrators and the MN School Boards Association encourage the passage of HF217, the Increase Teachers of Color Act of 2021 which aims at increasing the number of teachers who are of color or American Indian.

For too long, our students have not seen themselves reflected in the classrooms they are in each day. It has been well documented that when students DO see themselves in a teacher, administrator, or other adult in a leadership position within the building, they do better in school. Our two organizations support legislative initiatives and policies that help attract and retain teachers in areas of shortage, especially proposals that emphasize hiring staff that reflects our diverse student populations.

We thank Rep. Hassan for her authorship of this important legislation.

Please record your written testimony here and return this to sarah.burt@hosue.mn as an OCR compliant .pdf (optical character recognition)

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 3, 2021, HF217

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Angelica Torralba-Olague

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Teacher, South High School

City of Residence: Apple Valley, MN

My name is Angelica Torralba-Olague. I grew up in southside Minneapolis. I graduated from Minneapolis Public Schools and I've come back to teach as an ESL teacher at South High School in Minneapolis.

As an immigrant and former EL student, I have the lived experience of what my students are going through in the education system. I understand the language barriers, the cultural differences, and the navigational skills that prevent our students and families from fully participating in classes, conferences and school events.

I've had students visit me their senior year to tell me that the non traditional ways I have explained academic content during their freshmen and sophomore year when I had them, helped them in the rest of their classes in high school.

They've told me that sharing my own experiences as an ESL student helped them to become more confident and gave them a voice.

They've appreciated feeling seen and heard at school.

I've been called 'abaayo' by the Somali families, and my spanish speaking students have called me 'tia'.

Students have told me that I remind them of their aunt or their big sister.

This is a big honor because our EL students are highly relational, many have been separated from their family members and they strongly value their extended families.

We need more ESL teachers who came from immigrant backgrounds.

We need more teachers of color who can teach content AND also be that cultural bridge for our students.

As an ESL teacher of color, my impact extends beyond immigrant students. I am able to understand all of my students in a more positive lens, see their strengths and brilliance - and not accept the deficit labels that have molded traditional thinking of our BIPOC students.

I remember my first teaching job where I had all white teacher colleagues. We were in a student support meeting and one particular African American female student kept on coming up. A couple of the white teachers described her as having an "attitude", "hard to work with", "not a team player", a "primadona" while the rest of the white teachers just remained silent.

If you are a person of color and have ever worked in a majority white workplace, you understand these descriptions are clearly coded language that perpetuates an institutional racist culture. Because I have this lived experience, I didn't view her personality in that way - and saw it as an asset, as part of her geniusness.

Instead of making her “code switch”, I encouraged her to be who she is in these classes, pursue her very many goals and keep using her voice. I mentored her throughout high school and helped her through the college application process. This same student graduated from a local private college, she is now an international model, a business owner and has her own non profit in North Side Minneapolis, all while serving her country as well.

Teachers of color matter at school - to change the perception of our students of color and the language we are using to describe them.

If you think teachers of color only benefit students of color, well, I have another story when I worked with a white male student. This particular student has a background that one might say they don't have privilege because they were raised by a single mother and his dad was incarcerated.

During my time with this student, we discussed topics of equity, racial identity, achievement gap, opportunity gap - controversial topics that teachers of color are more apt to discuss than white teachers. I continued to mentor him and he kept in contact with me through his time in college. This student has grown so much raising awareness about educational access not only in the local area but recently extended internationally. He messaged me recently to let me know that he started an initiative to work with boys and young men around masculinity without violence. He thanked me for helping to guide him to understand his identity and the privileges that he carries. He told me he is going to continue to listen to BIPOC folks and learn from their work, and how this will guide him as he carries this work as a white man.

If we had more teachers of color, how many more students of color could we reach in realizing their already innate potential?

If we had students see diverse teachers that represent the multiracial population in their schools and communities, we would be elevating the teaching profession and sending an important message that people of color can hold positions of authority. We would break many stereotypes that hold many BIPOC people down.

In order to increase more teachers of color, we must prioritize and fully fund the spending proposal in this bill.

We need to expand the Collaborative Urban Education programs. After undergrad, this is how I was able to pursue my ESL license. I applied and got in with 25 other people in my cohort. Majority of us were teacher candidates of color. It was the first time that I was in a higher Ed class with mostly BIPOC people. The conversations were so rich, and it was the first time I authentically felt like I belonged in a college setting. Many of us in that cohort are all working in urban education settings as teachers and some are now working in leadership roles at their school districts. We need to expand these programs so more school districts can include them as part of their strategic hiring plans.

But we shouldn't start at post baccalaureate level. We need to start at even a younger age to create a pipeline of teacher candidates of color by supporting the Concurrent Enrollment courses and Grow Your Own Pathway programs for secondary students.

At South High school starting next year we will have these Concurrent Enrollment courses in partnership with Minneapolis College where students will ultimately take 4 college credit courses while in high school and the goal is for them to finish a teaching license. They will have a a

hiring preference for MPS jobs having gone through the Introduction to Urban Education program. One pathway after being a graduate, some could work as AVID tutors, special ed associate educators, bilingual assistants while obtaining their teaching license through the Grow Your Own program. Another pathway once students graduate the program is to go full time at a college or university with scholarships and grants that will help fund their teaching license.

We want to sustain this Education Pathway at South High school that we will start next year and Minneapolis wants to extend it to additional high schools, so we can build a pipeline of teacher candidates of color and be part of accomplishing that annual goal of 1% (or 680) increase of teachers of color. In addition, these Intro to Urban Education courses will help transform the culture of South High and Minneapolis Public Schools, prioritizing equity and the needs of our Black students, our All Nations students and our EL students. If we are serious about having more students of color attend college, we need to put resources and financial support to make that happen.

Lastly, mentoring has been a major theme in my testimony. Mentoring works at all ages and all professions, no matter what seniority level. Mentoring provides an affinity space to share specific grievances that people of color have working in predominantly white spaces. So the first year the school district started to financially support the affinity spaces happening at the schools. Mentoring in BIPOC spaces are more collective and we understand that all of us, no matter the years of experiences, have knowledge to share and we learn from each other. We build each other's confidence, and I probably wouldn't be up here today providing my testimony, had it not been for my BIPOC affinity mentoring group.

It shouldn't take for us to have a racial reckoning to get the support that teachers of color need. We need this institutional support with legislative action to make our school districts accountable to recruit, prepare and retain our teachers of color. I urge you to fully fund the Increase Teachers of Color of Act which will shape our schools' culture and practices that impact our students of color.

Thank you,

Angelica Torralba-Olague



MN ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Unleashing education from convention

Monday, February 1, 2021

TO: Members of the House Education Finance Committee
RE: HF 217 – Increase Teachers of Color Act

The Minnesota Association of Charter Schools supports HF 217 – Increase Teachers of Color Act and urges passage of the Act as a means of enhancing equity and equitable educational opportunities in all of Minnesota's public schools.

As an Association we believe that:

“Equity requires that we first, recognize and eliminate historical barriers to equitable educational opportunities. Second, quality public education requires that the structures, policies, and practices be designed in a manner that recognizes a full spectrum of equitable student outcomes, and the fair and just allocation of resources which enable each student to achieve their individual potential.”

We believe that the legislation addresses some of the barriers to equitable educational opportunities.

We believe that the legislation provides a framework for diversifying Minnesota's education workforce to reflect the changing demographics of our state and student population. The provisions to expand the Grow Your Own programs, the Introduction to Teaching post-secondary enrollment courses, and teacher mentoring programs are especially critical to developing and supporting the talents of our para-professional workforce and young people to join the teaching profession.

We believe that the legislation provides a scaffold to build curriculum, and address school climate and the social-emotional needs of students. The provisions to link the World's Best Workforce and strategic plans of schools is especially important as a means of assuring that all of Minnesota's students have an opportunity to learn, understand, and appreciate the people they will work with, and the cultural mosaic of our society.

So, on behalf of the more than 67,000 students who attend Minnesota's chartered public schools, 62% of whom are students of color or indigenous students, and 21% English learners, the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools urges you to enact HF 217.

Sincerely,

Eugene Piccolo
Executive Director