

March 21, 2018

Honorable Members of the E-12 Finance Committee,

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, and Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage submit this letter in strong support of **H.F. 3594** and **H.F. 3206**, two bills seeking to address pathways to teaching and retention of teachers of color and American Indian teachers.

As state agencies, we are charged with advising you on behalf of Minnesotan communities who collectively represent 19% of the state's population and 32.5% of the student body. While each of our Councils' constituent communities are widely diverse in history, culture, assets and challenges, our constituent communities have two issues of shared concern relating to education: the achievement gap that is disproportionately affecting many of our constituents and the shortage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers.

We support **H.F. 3594** and **H.F. 3206** for the following reasons:

1. **H.F. 3594 – The Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA) of 2018 – seeks to increase the return on FY18-19 investments by focusing on budget-neutral efforts to retaining teachers of color and expanding pathways to teaching.** We advise the Legislature to remain committed to a comprehensive approach by supporting the innovative, stakeholder-driven provisions in the ITCA of 2018. A close partner in the work, the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian teachers in MN, conducted stakeholder engagement with diverse educators and others to develop strategies needed for addressing the key barriers to the profession.
2. **Both H.F. 3206 and H.F. 3594 increase appropriations to address support needed for Grow Your Own programs, expanding pathways to teaching.** We collaborated in drafting, and fully support both bills. However, we support lowering the qualifying percentage for student district diversity to 25% (see line 4.13 in **H.F. 3594**), for all programs beyond the nonconventional residency programs as requested by the MN Rural Education Association and the MN School Board Association.
3. **H.F. 3594 and H.F. 3206 seek to address a critical teacher shortage, in order to meet our state's goal to close achievement gaps.** We must continue to steadily work to address our state's crisis-level of 4.2% teachers of color and American Indian teachers, or just over 2,500 teachers. Tackling this shortage is imperative to turning around our nation-leading achievement gaps for students of color and American Indian students and to meeting our State's education attainment goals. The research is clear: all students benefit from having diverse teachers. It also shows that they particularly improve standardized test scores, attendance, retention, advanced-level course enrollment, graduation rates, and college-going rates for students of color.

- H.F. 3594 and H.F. 3206 will allow our state to continue our long-term commitment to educational opportunities for all Minnesotans.** In 2016, the Legislature and Governor agreed to amend several state statutes to assure that K-12 students have “equitable access to effective and diverse teachers” who reflected the diversity of students in a district. Minnesota’s strong commitment to creating sound education policies is reflected in Minnesota’s continued high rankings in education. As Minnesota adapts to demographic changes, however, the State’s success will be ensured by implementing targeted interventions and approaches that address the specific needs of students of color and American Indian students.

Progress was made in addressing this shortage under your leadership in 2017. We advise that our State’s leadership make a commitment to act each legislative session on efforts to increase the diversity of our state’s teacher workforce. In this regard, we respectfully ask that you to support **H.F. 3594** and **H.F. 3206** as modest and fiscally-responsible bills that sustain momentum in addressing the long-term crisis we face.

Sincerely,

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