



## Minnesota

P.O. Box 14720  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
T: (651) 645-4097  
[www.aclu-mn.org](http://www.aclu-mn.org)  
@aclumn

October 27, 2020

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Racial Justice,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota is pleased that the House has taken time this interim to hold discussions on racism and racial justice. The ACLU-MN is active in the courts, in state and local government advocacy, and in engagement with the community on the ground. Working for racial justice is a key pillar of the ACLU-MN's mission to preserve, protect, and fully realize civil liberties for all Minnesotans.

Racism and racial injustice permeate virtually every facet of structures and systems in the United States, and Minnesota is not an exception to this reality. From education and housing to public safety and corrections, there are serious and persistent racial disparities that harm communities of color. While policies, laws, and regulations may appear facially neutral and unbiased, they do harm when applied unequally. As an example, take enforcement of marijuana laws. An ACLU study found that while white and Black Americans use marijuana at similar rates, nationwide Black Americans are over three times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession.<sup>1</sup> In Minnesota, Black Americans are over five times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession.<sup>2</sup>

A full discussion of proposals and recommendations for furthering racial justice in Minnesota is beyond the scope of this letter. Here we would like to highlight two key areas of policy that the Legislature should prioritize in this work.

First, the Legislature should prioritize continued work on policing reforms to improve overall public safety and public health. The Legislature took modest steps during special session to begin laying some groundwork for change, but the ACLU-MN has been consistent in its calls for policymakers to go further. Minnesota's current systems of policing and public safety disproportionately harm the health and safety of communities of color. The killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers was not an isolated tragedy, but a glaring, visceral symptom of the racial injustice that Minnesota's law enforcement and legal systems perpetuate. Policing and public safety reform measures that demand transparency around law enforcement, accountability for peace officer misconduct, and address root causes rather than symptoms must be a priority for the Legislature.

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<sup>1</sup> ACLU, "A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform," <https://www.aclu.org/report/tale-two-countries-racially-targeted-arrests-era-marijuana-reform>, p. 7

<sup>2</sup> ACLU, "A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform," <https://www.aclu.org/report/tale-two-countries-racially-targeted-arrests-era-marijuana-reform>, p. 72

Second, the Legislature should focus on reforming Minnesota's legal system to address disproportionately harmful impacts on communities of color. Cash bail, driver's license suspensions for unpaid traffic tickets, asset forfeiture, marijuana enforcement, technical violations, and other systems that restrict people's access to justice and drive mass incarceration are intrinsically linked with public safety enforcement practices that disproportionately target communities of color and bring them into contact with the legal system. Ending and/or vastly reducing these types of systems must go hand-in-hand with transformative public safety reform.

As stated previously, the work of furthering racial justice in Minnesota can't be bound to the four corners of this letter or the two areas mentioned above. Nor is it work that should be considered "finished" after the passage of any one particular piece of legislation. The ACLU-MN looks forward to working with the Legislature next session and beyond on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Julia Decker  
Policy Director  
ACLU-MN



Oct. 27, 2020

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Select Committee on Racial Justice  
Re: Recommendations to address public health crisis of racism

Dear Co-Chairs Moran, Richardson, Demuth and Committee Members:

The Association for Nonsmokers-MN (ANSR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the human and economic toll tobacco takes on Minnesota. We thank this committee for working to address the systemic, institutionalized racism faced by Black Minnesotans, as well as American Indians and other communities of color. **As you finalize recommendations from the Select Committee, we hope you will include a measure to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota.** This policy would improve health and alleviate tobacco-related health disparities.

Since 1975, ANSR has played a leading role in shaping state and local tobacco policy. While policies such as Freedom to Breathe and a tobacco tax increase have saved countless lives and dollars, the benefits have not been felt equally in all communities. Black, Indigenous and other communities of color continue to face unconscionable tobacco-related health disparities. One step Minnesota can take to address these disparities is clearing the market of all flavored tobacco products – especially menthol.

For decades, the tobacco industry has marketed menthol cigarettes specifically to African American people by advertising in Black publications and neighborhoods, sponsoring concerts, and even driving around Black neighborhoods handing out free samples of menthol cigarettes. Today, 88 percent of African American smokers smoke menthols, compared to 22 percent of white smokers. The exclusion of menthol tobacco in a federal 2009 ban on flavored cigarettes has institutionalized these disparities and cost precious lives. One research study found that if menthol had been banned when all other cigarette flavors were disallowed, by 2050 there would be an estimated 10 percent reduction in overall smoking prevalence and up to 633,252 lives would have been saved, including more than 200,000 Black lives.

To date, **17 Minnesota communities**, including St. Paul, Minneapolis and Duluth, have restricted flavored and menthol tobacco products in some way. At the State Capitol, a bill (HF3032) to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota passed two committees in the House last session but was not heard in the Senate. We are making progress, but waiting any longer to remove flavored tobacco from Minnesota's marketplace will lead to increased health disparities and more needless deaths.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Weigum  
President, Association for Nonsmokers-MN

10/20/20

**The Honorable Rep. Rena Moran, Chair; Rep. Ruth Richardson, Co-Chair; Rep. Lisa Demuth, Vice-Chair  
Select Committee on Racial Justice**

**Re: Economic Impact**

**Honorable Legislators,**

There used to be data that for the same education, educational costs, and job, a white male made more than a white woman. She made more than a man of color, and he made more than a woman of color. Women had to be twice as good, work twice as hard, yet get paid less than her male counterpart.

Thank you for raising the issues about racial justice and injustices. There is a need for systemic change which legislators can create policies on. Whether purposely or not, many statistics are not kept on the types of racial injustices that authorities kept hidden or people were unaware of where to go for help. Some examples of what many face are:

Case 1: Ethnic WWII veteran, college graduate government worker supporting a family of 6+ and elderly parents, and a side job in real estate investment and property management - endured daily racism and discrimination from other colleagues and superiors, inequities in paying higher prices and interest than non-ethnic counterparts, and was often "cheated" in consumer purchases. Non-ethnic son-in-law and attorneys sued him for his and his wife for their assets, which non-ethnic judges gave them in their fraudulent acts to profit. Although a multi-millionaire before the fraudulent lawsuit, he and his wife died "paupers" "with nothing but the clothes on their back". They were made "homeless", had no jobs or income other than a little social security they had to live on, but it was eaten up by attorneys taking advantage of the elderly seniors in needless court actions or "legal services". Their children and grandchildren did not know enough to help, or help was not available.

Case 2: Ethnic veteran, college graduate, small business owner of several businesses, supporting family of 5+ and elderly parents – endured racism, inequities in paying higher prices and interest than non-ethnic counterparts, and was often "cheated" in purchases including for his businesses. Multi-millionaire before fraudulent lawsuits for his funds, assets and homes, he is a senior living in poverty with a minimum wage part-time job, has no assets, was made homeless but now pays rent. Children and grandchildren don't know enough to help, or help has not been available.

Cases 3 and others: Numerous college and higher educated ethnic females have similar experiences as cases above. Seniors live on only social security, some have government assistance including healthcare while others don't, many are made "homeless". One case took 5 years of health services for the same condition that continually got worst – before the right doctor treated the condition.

Taxpayers' government funded healthcare and insurance company covered all costs and hospitalizations. Victims face the same costs as others but are targeted in numerous unethical and fraudulent ways to take their money. Relatives don't know enough to help, or help has not been available. Legal aid does not cover most of these types of cases.

Racism and discrimination of vendors, providers and others including in "healthcare"; and their fraud, and/or racist and discriminatory acts against people of color - remain victims' unrecovered funds, and costs to government and "taxpayers: too. Denny Hecker was held accountable only because he defrauded a large creditor.

**Solutions include systemic changes in policies, procedures, and operations that will prevent loss of funds through racism and discrimination, and help make victims whole. They include, but are not limited to the following:**

**1) Statewide policy that no government money will be spent on any employee, agency, programs, services, or collaborations where racism and discrimination is involved. Restitution to victims by perpetrators, their agency, their insurance, and fees and penalties against perpetrators. Reducing barriers to remove perpetrators. Provide other methods of accountability.**

**2) Tighten consumer protection, business and commerce laws to prevent racism and discrimination in all transactions. Increase licensing and other fees for a recovery fund for victims. Restitution to victims by perpetrators, their company, their insurance, fees and penalties against perpetrators, and using the recovery fund. Reducing barriers to remove perpetrators. Provide other methods of accountability.**

**3) Expanding employment laws to reduce hiring employees who discriminate and harm others, reduce barriers to remove perpetrators, and provide other methods of accountability.**

**4) Transform the justice system, government agencies, partnerships, vendors, personnel policies and other government funded systems, collaborations, programs, services, and activities to prevent racism and discrimination, retribute victims, remove perpetrators, and provide other methods of accountability.**

**5) Expand laws covering “homeless prevention and intervention” to remove the root causes including where racism and discrimination is the cause. Restore victims to having a home and other restitution by perpetrators, their agencies, their insurance, fees and penalties against perpetrators, and using the recovery fund. Reducing barriers to remove perpetrators. Provide other methods of accountability.**

**6) Establish partnerships and collaborations in all sectors and all levels to act on solutions to root causes, transform systems and change methods of operations and doing business.**

**These are bold actions to transform systems and methods of doing business that has long been needed. The people need visionaries, pioneers, and leaders of strength and courage to take the steps for positive transformation that’s needed.**

**Thank you for your consideration of some of the solutions needed to provide racial justice, and lead Minnesota into a new era ahead of the nation.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jean Lee, Pres., Exec. Dir.

APAHC – the Housing Consortium, Children’s Hope Intl/R & R Family Ctrs, and others.

c/o: [childrenshopeinternational@hotmail.com](mailto:childrenshopeinternational@hotmail.com)



## Children's Dental Services

636 Broadway Street NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Sarah Wovcha, JD, MPH, Executive Director  
[swovcha@childrensdentalservices.org](mailto:swovcha@childrensdentalservices.org)  
612-636-1577

ATTN: Select Committee on Racial Justice  
RE: Testimony Regarding Critical Access Dental Provider Program (CADP)

Children's Dental Services is a 101 year old non-profit that provides dental care to over 37,000 Minnesotans annually across 59 underserved counties, over 80% of whom represent people of color, immigrant, refugee and indigenous communities. Over half of our staff of 100 represent the communities we serve, and together we speak 23 languages and hail from 26 countries. Our "hub and spoke" model brings a full range of portable, sit-based dental care directly to locations where communities naturally congregate, including schools, Head Starts, homeless shelters, libraries, housing complexes, WIC clinics, mosques, powwows, churches, county service hubs, and dozens of other easily accessible locations.

Dental disease is the most common, chronic childhood illness in Minnesota, exceeding the cases of asthma, diabetes and obesity, and leading to thousands of hours missed from school and work. Low-income children and families and communities of color are most severely affected. Children's Dental Services is the largest non-profit provider of dental care targeting low-income and diverse children and pregnant women. Over 98% of the patients we serve have incomes below the Federal Poverty Level, 86% receive Medical Assistance and 12% are uninsured. Last year we provided more than \$6.5 million in free care. We are only able to sustain the work we do with the support of the Critical Access Dental Payment program (CAD). Without the extra payments provided by CAD we simply would not be able to expand essential dental care to Minnesota's most vulnerable. CAD has been a target for elimination over the past two years, which is alarming. It is a critical component in leveling the playing field and addressing Minnesota's deep health disparities. I thank you all for your important work, and urge you to support CAD as an essential resource supporting health equity among communities of color.

Respectfully,

*Sarah Wovcha*

Sarah Wovcha, JD, MPH  
Executive Director

October 27, 2020

Dental Access Partners

Rep. Rena Moran  
575 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Ruth Richardson  
403 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155



RE: Racial Injustice Committee

Dear Rep. Moran and Rep. Richardson:

Thank you both for co-chairing the Select Committee on Racial Justice and for leading these very difficult but extremely important conversations over the past few months. Dental Access Partners is a coalition between Apple Tree Dental, Community Dental Care, and Hennepin Healthcare and we are three of Minnesota's most essential Critical Access Dental (CAD) program providers. We serve people enrolled in public programs with more than 80% of our patients being a Minnesota Health Care Program (MHCP) enrollee. In fact, our three non-profit 501c3 organizations alone provide nearly 15% of the dental care to Minnesota's public programs enrollees every year.

Because of the patient populations we serve, we unfortunately understand the alarming oral health disparities facing communities of color in Minnesota and we feel it is critically important to bring these issues to the forefront. According to the CDC, Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians and Alaska Natives generally have the poorest oral health of any racial and ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this trend begins in childhood; the greatest racial and ethnic disparity among children aged 3–5 years and aged 6–9 years is seen in Mexican American and non-Hispanic Black children. Into adulthood, Black Americans and Mexican Americans between 35–44 years old experience untreated tooth decay nearly twice as much as non-Hispanic whites.

We can attest that our patients, which include low-income children and families, recent immigrants, frail elders, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable people fit into much of these national statistics. We try to make access to oral health care more accessible by delivering care at over 175 sites, including clinics, hospitals, schools, nursing homes, and community centers. We offer education to encourage good dental health habits, preventive care to prevent disease, treatments that help avoid costly consequences, and specialty services needed by Minnesota's most medically complex individuals.

Because Minnesota's reimbursements are amongst the lowest in the nation, a limited number of providers participate in MHCP programs. Unfortunately, we cannot cover our basic costs and are losing staff because we are unable to compete for employees or retain dentists who can earn more by not serving publicly-insured patients. **If the state were to lose providers like our organizations, the limited access MHCP enrollees currently have would decrease substantially and disparities for Minnesotans of color would grow.** Unfortunately, there continues to be a proposal from DHS to end the CAD program. Without this program in place, providers like us will not be able to survive. We are currently working with other CAD providers to refresh the program into an oral health home model that is value-based and recognizes:

- Contributions to dental access
- Scope and diversity of services
- Continuity and coordination of care

- Improvements in health outcomes

We pride ourselves on serving those most in need of dental services and have continued to do so as disparities widened throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been actively working to find new ways to reduce oral healthcare inequities such as bringing back adult periodontal benefits which were lost in 2009. We look forward to partnering with you both and the rest of your colleagues to improve the oral healthcare of all Minnesotans. If you have any questions for us or would like useful data, please contact our contract lobbyist, Tara Erickson, at [Tara@tgeconsultingmn.com](mailto:Tara@tgeconsultingmn.com) or 612-280-8998.

Sincerely,

Michael Helgeson, DDS Chief Executive Officer Apple Tree Dental	Karen Kleinhans, MHA Chief Executive Officer Community Dental Care	Mary Seieroe, DDS Chair, Dentistry Hennepin Healthcare
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News Release · Press Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rev

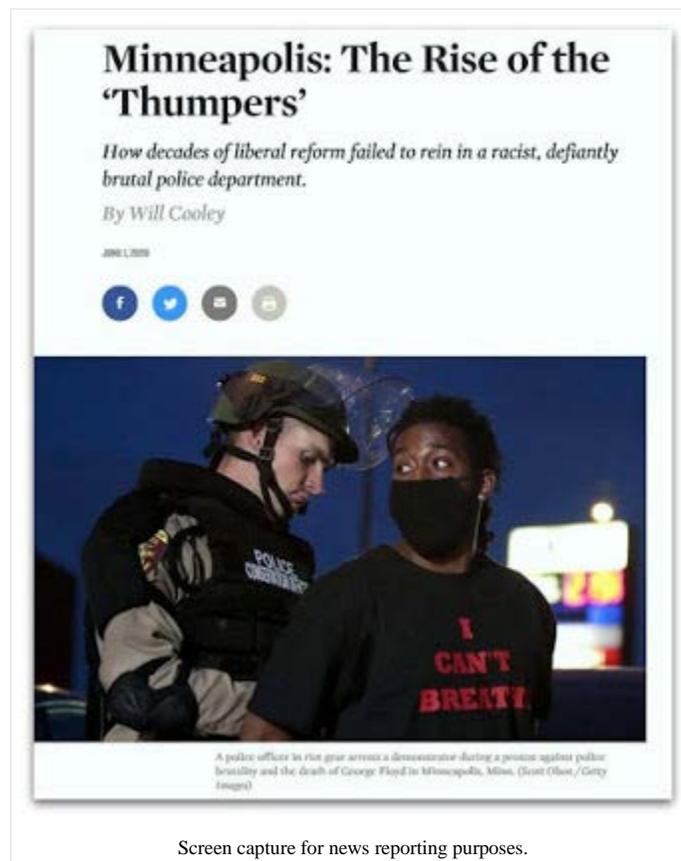
Email: [the.reverend.fowl@gmail.com](mailto:the.reverend.fowl@gmail.com)

Website: <https://the-reverend-fowl.blogspot.com/>

# Hunting Boycott In Minnesota Over Human Rights Abuse

## *Wildlife Agency Distresses BIPOC*

Minneapolis, Minn. (October 6, 2020) - In May of 2020, photos of militarized game wardens started showing up on social media and the news. The difficulty with these photos (screen captures for news reporting purposes) is evident in the photos themselves: civilians and *BIPOC* [Black, Indigenous and People Of Color] are being treated as enemies by wildlife agents. Additional photos show surveillance abuse by wildlife agencies. The photos speak for themselves.



Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**Chron** Sections

## Where you can donate in support of George Floyd protests

If you want to participate in a way aside from protesting, here's how.

By [Joshua Sargent](#) Updated 10:44 am CDT, Tuesday, June 2, 2020

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Photo: Scott Olson / Staff / Getty

Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**A lifelong hunter (he has conditions of anonymity) is organizing a hunting boycott on the grounds of these photos. After going through Bible College and favoring waterfowl hunting, he dubbed himself *The Reverend Fowl*. His online friends call him “Rev”. Rev discloses that he is biracial and worried; “My feelings are locked in the middle of this.”**

Published on Monday, June 01, 2020 by Common Dreams

## In 'Unhinged' Call, Trump Urges Governors to 'Use the Military' and Throw Demonstrators in Jail 'For 10 Years'

"He's describing fascism."

by Jake Johnson, staff writer



142 Comments



A demonstrator is arrested during a protest against police brutality and the killing of George Floyd, on May 31, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. (Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images)

Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**Rev explains that (Police) militarization necessitates an enemy. He says there is undeniable evidence that BIPOC are the preferred enemy: "There's a never-ending war fought by state wildlife agents to overpower federal treaties with American Indians, this is perfect, bald-faced systemic racism."**



Screen capture for news reporting purposes.



2:28 p.m. ET, June 1, 2020

### More than 80% of people booked in Minneapolis jail from Minnesota

From CNN's Casey Tolan



Police surround protesters as they arrested on May 31, in Minneapolis during a protest against the death of George Floyd. Kerem Yucel/AP/Getty Images

Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**“I knew this had been going on behind the scenes in ceded/treaty territories, but now it’s happening in the streets of major cities and they want you to think this is normal.”**



2 1 3

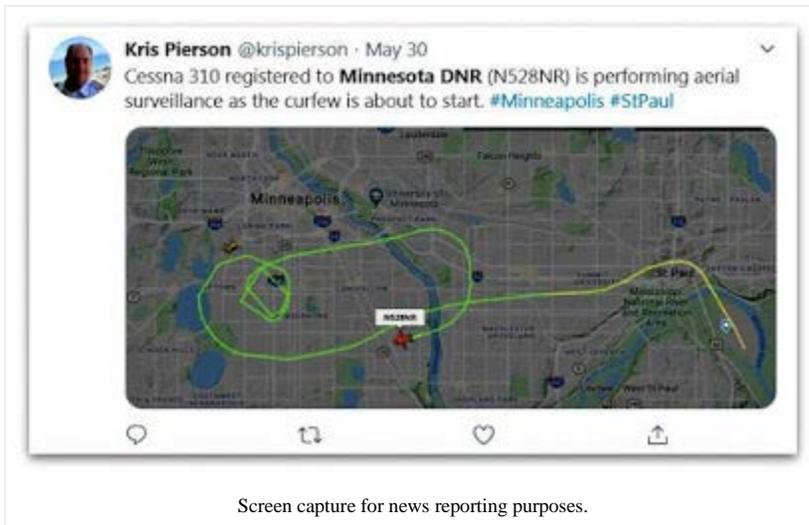


**Nick Woltman** @nickwoltman · Aug 28

Upon closer inspection, I see that these are actually DNR conservation officers.

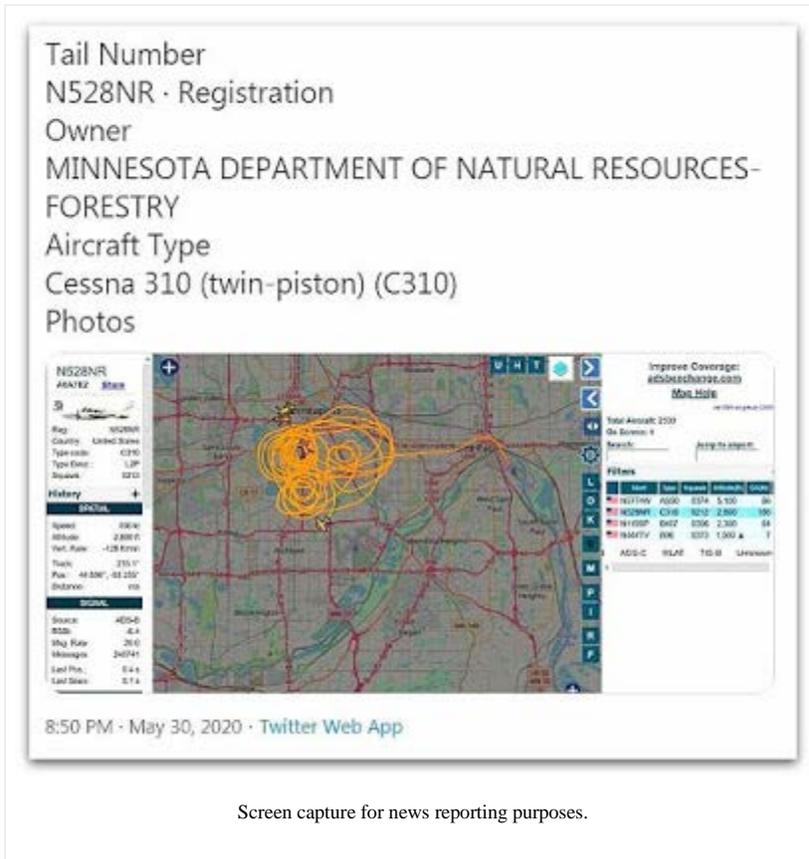
Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**Rev wants everyone to boycott hunting and fishing in Minnesota until game wardens demilitarize and stop violating human rights. Rev advises everyone to donate to something better instead.**



Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**Rev believes that hunting and fishing fees have clearly become military/war taxes and that Conscientious Objectors are being denied access to (wild) food. This is in spite of 22 state constitutions that declare the right to hunt and fish.**



Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

Because wildlife agencies' mission creep distresses BIPOC, Rev warns about any commitment to call game wardens *Conservation Officers*. He believes 'conservation' is a paradox, a code word to validate privilege and justify human rights abuse. Use of the word conservation has climbed sharply after it emerged from obscurity in the early 1900's.

NEWS

## DNR issues citations to tribal members in treaty protest

Written By: Chelsey Perkins / Forum News Service | Aug 28th 2015 - 9pm.



After setting their gill net, Anishinaabe Todd Thompson and Jim Northrup paddle for the shore of Gull Lake in Nisswa with the Minnesota Department of Natural resources officers in the background. Forum News Service / Steve Kohls

Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**“I didn’t sign up for this when I paid for a hunting or fishing license. We shouldn’t be forced to fund militarization and human rights abuse, but this is the paywall that stands between us and (natural) food, the food we’re supposed to be eating.”**



ON AIR 0:00

The Takeaway with Tanzina Vega

## MN DNR cites tribal members in second day of treaty rights challenge

Jon Collins and John Enger August 28, 2015 1:47 p.m.



Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

**“My traditions are being held hostage. Hunting is a spiritual need for me because I’m human. Humans have a right to food. This is a very lonely and depressed place for me right now. This is one of the most difficult moments of my life.”**

THE SLATEST

## Minnesota Said Those Arrested Were From Out of State. Records Suggest That Isn't True.

By DANIEL POLITI

MAY 31, 2020 • 11:40 AM



Police hold batons as they stand guard near the fifth police precinct during a demonstration to call for justice for George Floyd, a black man who died while in custody of the Minneapolis police, on Saturday in Minneapolis. Chandan Khanna/Getty Images

Screen capture for news reporting purposes.

Rev considered using private hunting preserves (where no hunting license is needed) this fall in an attempt to distance himself from the state's monopoly on hunting and natural foods. He was frustrated to learn that he cannot afford nearby hunting preserves. Most Minnesota hunting preserves require an annual membership of \$625-\$2000.



**Read Rev's preliminary expose on hunting:**

*reasons NOT to try hunting and fishing · In Memory of John Lewis · American Statesman*

## **The Reverend Fowl | Sane Adventure**

Dear Chair Moran and Chair Richardson,

Thank you again for the opportunity given to members of the public on October 13th to share ideas that would bring us closer to racial justice in Minnesota.

Yesterday, I spoke on behalf of education equity in our state in my role as Executive Director at E4E-MN and as Director of the Richfield Board of Education. At the end of my statement, Chair Moran asked that I shared my talking points related to policy changes about funding, teacher diversity, and resources for COVID relief. You may find my recommendations below.

The enclosed set of policy recommendations are the result of our work supporting MN teachers to advocate for the policy changes they feel are needed to improve student outcomes in Minnesota.

Each year, we convene a Teacher Action Team (TAT) cohort that spends the fall semester researching and crafting policy recommendations for legislators. ***We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in January to discuss the policy recommendations that will result from this year's TAT cohort.***

Should you agree to this invitation (I hope you do!), who would be the contact person to coordinate these meetings?

I encourage you to review previous [MN policy recommendation papers](#) so that you learn about the issues that our members have prioritized. Our recommendations in 2015 to the MN State Legislature regarding recruitment and retention of teachers of color were influential that season, and we are interested in continuing that work.

**Here are my talking points. I've underlined the challenges that may be resolved through legislation.**

1. Funding: **Equitable funding is only equitable if allocated where it's most needed.** Meaningful resource allocation is one critical part of moving the needle for students who are most short-changed by our current system.
2. Teacher Diversity: Teacher retention in general is a problem already, but keeping teachers of color with less seniority in our schools continues to be a challenge. **Existing LIFO rules in bargaining contracts should have exceptions that allow principals to keep teachers of color in school buildings when they are the least senior members of staff.**
3. Teacher preparation:
  - A. **It should not be so expensive to choose teaching as a career.** We need more teacher preparation program alternatives. Existing traditional programs have unpaid student-teacher requirements that keep potential teacher candidates from low-income backgrounds from choosing teaching

as a profession. Many people of color who wish to become a teacher, cannot afford unpaid student-teaching requirements.

- B. Programs should have better requirements to help candidates to be more culturally responsive.** Our teacher prep programs need to do better at preparing white teacher candidates to lead classrooms in a culturally responsive manner.
- a. The normative culture of students sitting in rows and columns is not culturally relevant to most cultures
  - b. This difference results in discipline disparities such as students who are asked to leave their classrooms, even now in the world of distance learning

4. COVID-19 Relief - Finally, please consider the devastating effects that the pandemic is having on already struggling students; access to technology, language and technology barriers, access to differentiated instruction, or homework support to name a few examples.

Thank you again for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you regarding my invitation to meet with you in January with E4E members to discuss policy recommendations.

In partnership,

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**Paula Cole**

Executive Director, E4E-Minnesota  
(she / her / hers)



m: 612-770-0126

2446 University Ave. West, Suite 100  
Saint Paul, MN 55114

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony.

My name is Jen Whetstone, LICSW and I am the Children's Community Based Services Clinical Director with Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center in Winona, MN. I am most importantly the blessed mother of a child who identifies as a 13 year old, "black and white" female. My daughter has verbalized confusion and frustration about racial injustices since she was in her early childhood years. She has expressed anger and feelings of helplessness as she becomes increasingly aware of the barriers that "people who look like me" face when trying to live healthy and happy lives in our communities. She desires to be a social justice leader as an adult and wants there to be "no more racism." Her greatest concern right now is "I am black, but I am also white. How do I say that the white part of me is bad without making me all bad?" She is continuously talking with me about her thoughts and feelings related to her racial identity development and the impacts to her identity development of violence and discrimination against People of Color, but she does not believe that she can do this with anyone outside of our home.

Youth of Color and their families are constantly exposed to information full of prejudices, requests to explain their reactions to racially motivated attacks played out in media, questioning and wondering from people who express desire to be allies, as well as those who invalidate their experiences.

The youth in our communities are facing unprecedented stressors currently, in addition to the "typical" ACES that are usually recognized by the adults tasked with providing support to them in the educational setting. Youth of Color are especially impacted by disparities in access to equitable supports in the school setting. Support plans or proposals for introduction of culturally and/or racially specific services and supports are too often dissected and debated as to whether they are essential. Such discussions are frequently laden with bias and microaggressions. Communities all over our state and country need to mandate programming and staffing at every school to provide culturally and racially specific support services to students of color. This is essential to healthy identity development of youth of all races and cultures. To not do this is harmful and unacceptable.

Our community is involved in moving forward a Trauma Informed Educators Project, under the umbrella of Resilient Winona County a collaborative coalition of more than 40 organizations and 200 individuals working to build a resilient, trauma-informed community. The group's work is focused on healing and addressing the causes of individual and community trauma through education, advocacy, and elevating voices.

The purpose of the Trauma Informed Educators Project:

Resilient Winona County's Trauma-Informed Educators Project will train a cohort of educators and staff to bring trauma-informed practices and resilience-building skills into Winona County preK-12 public schools from October 2020 through March 2021. The cohort will convene monthly to teach and learn from each other and practice skills. Cohort members will each practice their skills and learning within their school or district. They will

serve students and support educators and staff in a time of disruption driven by a pandemic, racial injustice, and dramatic transformation in education.

It is our hope that the development of these communities of practice will encourage responsible exploration of the targeted needs of youth who have experienced trauma, including those youth of color whom experience generational, racialized trauma.

Please recognize the necessity of healthy identity development of all of our youth, and do this by not denying our youth of color the specific supports that are more readily available to their counterparts whom are white.

Sincerely,

Jen Whetstone, LICSW  
Parent of an incredible young lady of color

**Jen Whetstone, MSW, LICSW, Certified Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapist  
Children's Community Based Clinical Director**

**Cell: 507.961.6550**





Dear committee Members.

I wake up every day thinking of new ways to help improve the quality of life for Somali/African women and their families. My name is Fartun Weli –the CEO of Isuroon a non-partisan and non-profit that works with Somali women and their families in MN. We are trust, strength based organization.

COV-19 crisis made clearer how POCi community is in jeopardy and can't be ignored any longer.

Challenges we see daily:

- Low census count
- High female led households
- High illiteracy rate for systems
- 80% relies on government assistant
- Resource for only needs based only

Opportunities:

- Driven community and wants to move out of poverty
- Strong value of education
- Entrepreneurship

**Proposed Recommendation: create POCI specific education waiver to pay private tutors. These families are on government assistance and will not be harder to add**

The education gap for children of color, in Minnesota, is as bad as it gets. Add to that the potential challenges that Immigrant children have such as a language barrier and parents who are illiterate in both English language and the educational system. Let me give you one example: Asha is a 26 year-old Somali mother without a high school education. She works 5 days a week and earns \$1200/per month. Her husband's work covers expensive rent and insurances. The family has two daughters one in high school and the other in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Becoming proficient in reading and math are the biggest reported challenges for Somali children. The after school programs aren't sufficient, therefore many families have started taking their children to a private tutor. The cost of a private tutor is \$130 a month for one subject. Asha's high school daughter is struggling with a D

in Math, Reading and 2 other subjects. The tutoring to help her become proficient is costing her \$520 a month. She fears that her younger daughter will also get behind and has attempted to get ahead of that and pays \$260 per month for math and reading. What this means is that with her monthly earnings of \$1200 per month, \$780 is going to pay for her daughters tutoring. Leaving little left for the family necessities. Unfortunately, Asha isn't alone. This is a painful reality for many Somali families.

In addition, we have seen that the health of these Somali mothers is at great risk, and more than 50% of them serve as the head of the household. Somalis also have one of the lowest preventative care access amount immigrants which puts more risk of hunger and chronic illness.

**Giving an education waiver that pays for a private tutoring will address several issues immediately:**

1. Stop families from having to choose between food or rent vs. paying a private tutor to prevent their children falling behind. Providing some economic stability
2. Give families the choice to choose which companies or individual tutors' best fit their needs and allow them to be involved in the learning process.

Conclusion: Talking about POCI education, health and economic challenges without a real solution doesn't serve us, so I hope a tangible investment for education which is the center of all of our community's wellbeing gets addressed today.

Fartun Weli, MPH, MAPP

CEO

Isuroon(Strong Women, Strong

952-564-1131

[www.isuroon.org](http://www.isuroon.org)

# Girl Scouts ConnectZ During COVID-19



**Girl Scouts ConnectZ is still here to serve girls.** Although the delivery may look different, our mission remains the same—to bring culturally responsive leadership programming to girls where they are, eliminate access barriers, and provide opportunities to girls to support them in reaching their full potential.

The health and safety of our girls, families and staff remain a top priority. **All CDC regulations and state guidelines will be followed**, and precautions to allow social distancing (if and when applicable) will be applied. Measures to ensure Internet safety will also be implemented in our planning.

Our staff is dedicated to working with each school/site to offer adjusted programming to meet girls where they are, including but not limited to:

- Distance learning plan integration
- Virtual troop meetings
- Drop-in hours
- Pre-recorded videos
- Delivered supply boxes
- Limited & safe in-person activities

ConnectZ will continue to offer:

- Culturally relevant, safe spaces for girls to build community and process challenging times together.
- Social emotional learning skills (SEL). We can help fill the critical gap in SEL needs for students navigating a virtual world.
- High-quality programming that will remain 100% free for girls to access.

*“I think it is so valuable to offer this program to the girls at my school. It gives them the opportunity to grow their self-esteem, leadership skills, and build community with others girls.” -Site Partner*

## DID YOU KNOW?

ConnectZ paves a successful pathway for girls. **86%** of participants report they get average or better grades in school, **83%** believe girls like them can be good at many different things, and **81%** felt a stronger sense of self-confidence

For more information on Girl Scouts during COVID-19 and for helpful resources, visit [gsrv.gs/covid19-updates](https://gsrv.gs/covid19-updates).



## Our Impact

ConnectZ Girl Scouts have full access to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience! Through Girl Scouts ConnectZ, girls can go to camp, earn badges, complete Journeys and Take Action projects, participate in the cookie program, and can earn the Girl Scout Gold Award.

**57%** of site partners say girls have improved behavior at school

**86%** of girls report they get average or better grades in school

**81%** of girls report they have a strong sense of self-confidence

**86%** want to make the world a better place to live

**83%** believe girls like themselves can be good at many different things

**81%** of girls report working together with their troop



## Affinity Groups

Some schools offer culturally-specific troops for high school girls. These are spaces to build sisterhood among girls who share identities such as our Asian/Hmong Women's Circles, Latinas Unidas troops, and Beta Gamma troops for African American, African, and black girls.

All girls can join our multicultural troops where all identities can be explored.

*"The best thing about Girl Scouts was being able to share my thoughts and ideas and not be judged, instead I felt validated and welcomed."  
- ConnectZ Girl Scout*

girl scouts  
connectz

strength.

sisterhood.

success.



*"The best thing about Girl Scouts this year was the amount of new information I was able to intake by just talking with my troop leader and the girls in my group."  
- ConnectZ Girl Scout*





## All About Girl Scouts ConnectZ

**Girl Scouts ConnectZ brings a culturally responsive leadership program to 3,000 girls throughout the Twin Cities and southern Minnesota.** Our program brings a K-12 curriculum that covers topics such as STEM, healthy relationships, culture, identity, financial literacy, arts and crafts, college and career readiness, and more. Girl Scouts ConnectZ meets the needs of girls today. We have adapted our delivery methods to reflect our current reality, but our mission remains the same.

Troop activities are girl-led, so girls take the lead on their learning. Girls build leadership and self-esteem by taking risks in a supportive environment where they know they can be themselves and lean on their Girl Scout sisters. Through sessions led by trained youth workers, ConnectZ provides continuous mentorship and holds a space for girls to belong, be seen, and be heard.



**\*3,000 girls served across Minnesota**

*\*This number may be adjusted during times of COVID-19 limitations.*

Girl Scouts ConnectZ partners with **approximately 80 unique sites and leads 180 troops.**

**90%** of girl participants received free or reduced-price lunch.

Girl Scouts ConnectZ is provided to all girls at **no cost** to them or their families.

*"I think it is so valuable to offer this program to the girls at my school. It gives them the opportunity to grow their self-esteem, leadership skills, and build community with others girls."*

*"These relationships are an important addition to our school community and student success."*

- Partners

# Out of Troop Experiences

## College + Career Readiness

Girl Scouts ConnectZ helps girls explore possibilities for a positive future through a variety of ways to discover higher education and career opportunities.

- In 2019 **30** girls participated in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Tour to Washington, D.C., and Maryland.
- **190** girls attended Women in Careers events to learn more about non-traditional career opportunities for women.



## STEM

We introduce girls of every age to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) that helped them see how they could improve the world.

- **1,300** girls participated in a STEM session.
- **177** girls attended a Womens in Careers event.



## Cultural Events

ConnectZ Latina Conference, Asian Women's Circle Overnight, and Girls in America.

## Outdoors

Connectz brings girls outside through day and overnight camp, as well as themed resident camps like Power Girls, and Counselor-In-Training. Our camps are a safe, all-girl environment, ideal for girls to try new things confidently, knowing their Girl Scout sisters and camp counselors have their back.

## ConnectZ During COVID-19

Girls need Girl Scouts more than ever. Our expanded delivery options help us reach girls virtually as well as in person, following Centers for Disease Control and state guidelines. Whether on a virtual platform or in person, the health and safety of our girls, families, and staff are our top priority.

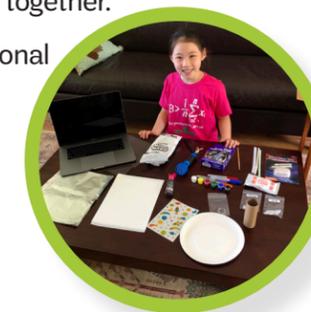
## New Meeting Options!

Our staff is dedicated to meeting girls where they are during these uncertain times. Programming options include, but are not limited to:

- Distance learning plan integration
- Virtual troop meetings
- Virtual drop-in hours
- Pre-recorded videos
- Delivered program supply kits
- Limited & safe in-person activities

## ConnectZ will continue to offer:

- High quality programming that will remain 100% free for girls to access.
- A culturally relevant, safe space for girls to build community and process challenging times together.
- Help develop social-emotional learning skills while navigating a virtual world.





Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys ConnectZ Program Written Testimony to the MN House Select Committee on Racial Justice, submitted October 26, 2020.

Members of the MN House Select Committee on Racial Justice,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments addressing the important work of this House Select Committee on Racial Justice. We also want to thank each of you for serving on this critical Select Committee.

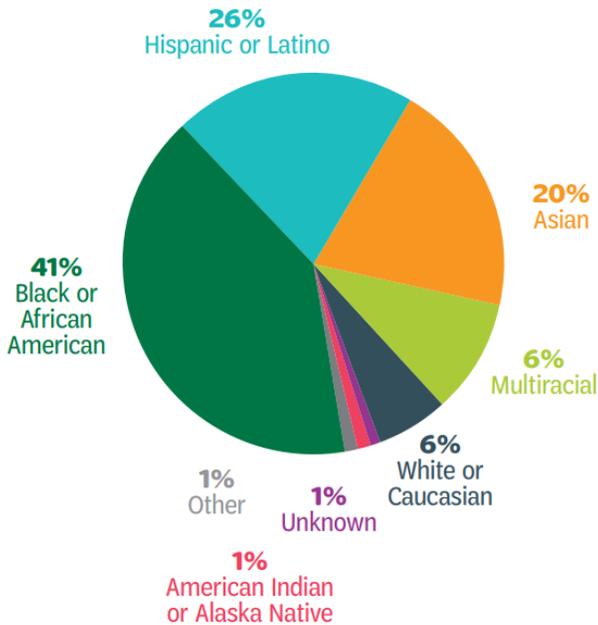
We are submitting this written testimony on behalf of the Girl Scouts River Valleys ConnectZ program. The ConnectZ program brings a culturally responsive leadership and skill development program to underserved and under resourced girls throughout the metro area and southern Minnesota. With a focus on closing the opportunity and achievement gap we face here in Minnesota; the program promotes college and career readiness and strengthens social-emotional development. Last year, ConnectZ served nearly 3,000 girls from low-income communities—90% of whom receive free or reduced-price lunch—and our program is provided at no cost to girls and families.

Collaboration with our nearly 100 schools and community sites is the reason why Girl Scouts ConnectZ is successful. We work closely with community partners to deliver a program tailored to the needs of girls of color from low-income communities, and to identify and provide access to girls who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in a leadership program. In Saint Paul Public Schools, 7 in 10 of our ConnectZ Girl Scouts utilize our program exclusively and do not access any other outreach or out of school program. For them, ConnectZ is the only exposure to leadership programming, college and career readiness, and culturally responsive social emotional learning that they receive in high school. Our ConnectZ troops are staff-led by youth development professionals (a majority of which identify as women of color) who create customized program delivery plans for each site to meet the needs of the girls and communities.

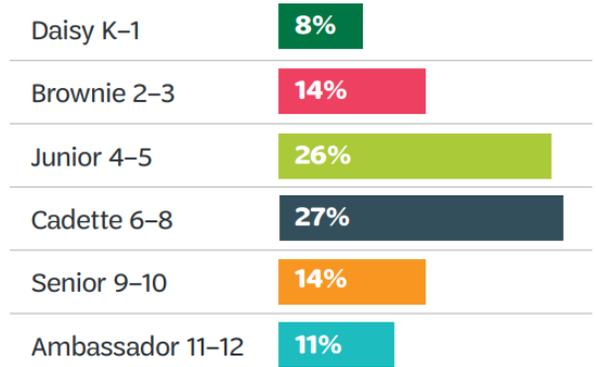
Girl Scouts believes in supporting and investing in girls as they take on challenges and societal barriers. ConnectZ provides exposure and access to key areas where girls of color continue to face inequity:

- Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)
- Life Skills, such as confidence and role models of color in school settings
- Outdoor Experiences and Skills, due to the financial limitations
- Leadership and Entrepreneurship

# Girl Scouts ConnectZ Demographics



## PARTICIPANTS BY GRADE LEVEL



Because we have seen firsthand the impact that participation in the ConnectZ program can have on underserved and under resourced girls, we have approached the legislature in recent years seeking the state’s partnership in investing in this program so that we can reach more girls around the state. While support for our legislation has grown in recent sessions, the legislation has not yet been passed. As your Select Committee on Racial Justice works to bring forward a slate of recommendations aimed at long overdue legislative steps that should be taken to address the racial inequity in our state, we would ask that you consider this targeted program given the significant impact on underserved and under resourced girls we believe a small state investment could make. Additional documents provided include the ConnectZ program brochure as well as how our program is adapting in the time of COVID-19. We would be happy to further discuss with any of you the details of the program and impact we see it having on the girls who participate. Please feel free to reach out at any time to Julia Burkstaller at [julia.burkstaller@girlscoutsrv.org](mailto:julia.burkstaller@girlscoutsrv.org).

Thank you again for your service on the MN House Select Committee on Racial Justice and we look forward to supporting your important work going forward.

**Tisha Bolger**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
 Girl Scouts River Valleys

**Jasmine Graves**  
*ConnectZ Program Director*  
 Girl Scouts River Valley

HealthPartners  
8170 33rd Avenue South  
Bloomington, MN 55425



healthpartners.com

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 1309  
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1309

October 27, 2020

Rep. Rena Moran Co-chair, Select Committee on Racial Justice  
Rep. Ruth Richardson Co-chair, Select Committee on Racial Justice  
Rep. Lisa Demuth Vice-chair, Select Committee on Racial Justice

Dear Representatives Moran, Richardson, and Demuth:

Thank you all for your leadership at the legislature and on this committee in particular. At HealthPartners, we believe in working together to build trusted relationships with patients and members, and creating an environment where everyone is welcomed, included and valued. We have important work to do. Racism and health care disparities gaps stand in our way and must be addressed. We have made some progress but must do more. For that reason our CEO, Andrea Walsh, has announced an ambitious and comprehensive effort to focus on racism, equity and inclusion in a new way.

We are proud of the progress our organization has made in health equity through a focus on reducing disparities in care, increasing diversity and inclusion in our workplaces, and engaging with communities to address social determinants such as access to health care, education and housing gaps, and income differences. At the same time, we must admit that we can and must do more.

Despite all of our efforts, staggering health inequities in our community persist. Achieving health equity requires not only addressing unequal health outcomes, but recognizing its relationship to systemic racism and racial bias, as well.

With our dedication to the health and well-being of every person, we have the responsibility and opportunity to help build a stronger organization and community where racism and inequity have no place—to recommit and accelerate our work by aligning existing efforts, and take a more intentional approach to address and dismantle systemic racism.

#### ***Setting our goals and priorities***

To sharpen our focus, by 2025 we want to achieve the following goals:

1. Increase the racial diversity of our **leadership team by 50%** -- from 10% today to 20% by 2025 to match that our patient and member population.
2. Build an anti-racist culture and deepen our collective understanding of cultural humility – starting with a requirement that **all team members complete bias training in 2021**.
3. **Eliminate disparities in maternal and infant care** – prenatal, perinatal, early childhood care have a critical impact on the future of both mother and child.
4. **Eliminate disparities in childhood immunizations** – redoubling our efforts to reach families and children to protect against preventable illness and disease.
5. Accelerate and expand our efforts to **eliminate disparities in chronic conditions and preventive screenings**, including Type II diabetes and vascular disease; preventive care including breast and colorectal cancer screening, and others; as well as a focus in specialty and hospital care.

6. Link the **four cornerstones of our work** – health equity, diversity and inclusion, advocacy and community partnership, and our anchor employer presence in St. Paul – to accelerate progress on all of our goals.

***New leadership team to guide, advance our work***

To help achieve our goals and advance this work, we are proud to announce the creation of the **HealthPartners Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Cabinet**. The cabinet is comprised a diverse group of leaders from across our organization including our CEO, and two thoughtful and passionate physicians as co-chairs:

- **Dr. Steven Jackson** is a physical medicine & rehabilitation physician at Regions Hospital, where he is also medical director of patient experience. As a Health Equity medical advisor, Dr. Jackson is committed to ensuring that every patient receives the care they need and deserve. He has a special interest in clinician communication and stands firmly on the principle of developing trust with patients and families. He believes that cultural humility and having a shared curiosity about our differences are key components in helping build a stronger organization and community.
- **Dr. Yeng Yang** is a primary care physician and clinic practice medical director at our St. Paul Clinic. As a medical advisor for Health Equity, Dr. Yang has a special interest in patient-family centered care and quality improvement in both clinical and operational processes. She believes the foundation to achieving good clinical outcomes are trusting patient-clinician relationships and experiences built around mutual respect, understanding and curiosity.

We are dedicated to the health and well-being of every person. And we have the responsibility to build a stronger organization and community where racism and inequity have no place. This includes recommitting and accelerating our work to address and dismantle systemic racism. We look forward to sharing updates on our progress and learning from the important discussions happening in your committee. Thank you in advance for your commitment to these efforts.

Sincerely,



James McClean  
Government Relations Director – Care Delivery  
[James.M.McClean@HealthPartners.com](mailto:James.M.McClean@HealthPartners.com)  
Direct 952-883-7201 Cell 612-805-9670

Ileana Mejia  
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits  
10/13/2020  
Full testimony for House Select Committee on Racial Justice

Hi. Thank you for allowing me to be here today to provide testimony on such an important issue. I appreciate this committee and the work you all do.

My name is Ileana Mejia and I am the public policy advocate at Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN). I also serve as co-chair for the Racial Equity and Joy coalition. MCN is the largest statewide association of nonprofits in the country, representing over 2,200 member organizations across the state.

In July 2020, the board of MCN approved a resolution acknowledging that racism is a public health crisis facing Minnesota, and that the nonprofit sector has an important role as part of a society-wide effort to dismantle systemic racism and address structural barriers to health and economic well-being in Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color.

Minnesota has one of the strongest nonprofit sectors in the nation, and as we work to address problems perpetuated by disparities and inequities of our society, nonprofits must recognize our own responsibility and history in relation to the current realities of structural racism. This includes ensuring nonprofits have the tools and resources to make changes within their own organizations and the sector to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion; and recognizing and learning from those leading the way in this work. MCN is working with our member nonprofits and internally to confront racism in our sector and our individual organizations, and we look to the legislature to do the same.

Nonprofits alone can't remake the world; that work will take the entire community.

Minnesota is one of the worst states in the nation for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to live in. We have the highest disparity rates in terms of housing, education, income, and home ownership. The unemployment gap before Covid-19 was 9% for Black folks but only 3% for white folks. White people are 10x less likely to be incarcerated vs Black folks. The home ownership rate for white folks is 76% and for Black folks it is 21.7%.

This didn't happen by accident. These disparities happened due to racist policies that impact Black and brown people more than white people. The Minnesota State Legislature is one of the most important and powerful decision making bodies in Minnesota. You have a unique power to pass equitable and just policies to help address these horrific disparities.

We urge members of this committee and all legislators to center racial equity in your work. Racial equity should not be an afterthought after one drafts a bill. Racial equity needs to be at the forefront of every policy that is put forth. You should constantly be asking yourselves if a policy is anti-racist or racist. If legislators are not sure what is anti-racist is, I recommend you to read Dr. Ibram X Kendi's book "How to be an Antiracist". Dr Kendi says that you can't eliminate racial inequities unless you acknowledge and eliminate racist policies. Simply put, to be antiracist is to support policies that lead to equity and justice. While there are many other brilliant great sources to learn from, Dr. Kendi is only one example on how to move forward in your anti-racism work.

MCN asks that every legislator that is elected in November to make a commitment to racial equity. Minnesota can be a leader in the nation in addressing racial disparities or we can continue to be a leader in having the worst racial disparities. This work will take dedication and commitment from all members

Ileana Mejia

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

10/13/2020

Full testimony for House Select Committee on Racial Justice

of the Minnesota State legislature and I ask all of you to help make Minnesota a place where everyone can thrive and be proud of the state they call home.

Thank you for letting me speak and I look forward to collaborating with you in the future.



**Minnesota House Select Committee on Racial Justice  
MacPhail North Minneapolis Partnerships**

North Minneapolis has been designated as one of the “most distressed communities found throughout the United States” by the Federal Government, and the need for arts programming in the neighborhood is high. According to the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) 2019 Results Summary, a staggering 73% of families within the region make less than \$30,000 a year. 98% of families in North Minneapolis are people of color, while 79% of families are African American. Minnesota’s academic achievement gap—which is pronounced in North Minneapolis—has consistently ranked among the most significant in the nation, especially in recent years.

Considering the Twin Cities’ recent position as a focal point for dysfunctional race relations in this country, the issue is incredibly timely. In addressing diversity, equity and inclusivity, MacPhail must think critically about long-standing barriers preventing BIPOC students from accessing the high-quality music education they deserve. As educators, we must do a more complete job of reflecting the diverse backgrounds and interests of our students while ensuring our teachers are adequately prepared to do so. Further, as innovators, we must utilize new technology that allows us to reach more students—and in different ways—than ever before. Through this work, we seek to bring an end to the colonization of BIPOC creative intellect and labor without giving proper credit, equity, or compensation in the field of music education.

According to a 2019 study released by the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board and prepared by Wilder Research, only 4.3% of school music educators in Minnesota are people of color. Because school music curricula have long been rooted in Eurocentric traditions that typically only include large ensembles of band, orchestra and choir, they often discount the interests and experiences of individuals from outside those backgrounds. Though 95% of K-12 students in Minnesota have access to Arts Education through public schools, only about 10% of students participate in music programs, with BIPOC students representing an even smaller portion of that 10%.

In direct response to this issue, MacPhail has developed a continuum of programs focused on the North Minneapolis community to build connections, collaborative skills, and a sense of personal achievement through a love of music that will last throughout students’ lives. Program offerings are intended to be sequential in nature, offering students and families the ability to receive tuition-free music education with built-in opportunities for growth throughout their adolescence, which will be supported by strong connections to teaching artists and other community members.

MacPhail operates several year-round programs directly addressing educational and achievement gaps, each of which take place through various partnerships in North Minneapolis. These programs include:

- MacPhail Northside Youth Orchestra (MNYO) for middle and high school students, with rehearsals taking place on Saturdays.
- MacPhail Community Youth Choir (MCYC) for high school students, with rehearsals also on Saturdays.
- After-School Strings and Beatboxing for students in grades 3-8 attending Ascension School and Harvest Best Academy.
- Sing Play Learn early childhood music education at Ascension, Way to Grow, Northside Child Development Center, Early Childhood Family Education Mona Moede and PICA Head Start for children up to 8 years old.

Established in 1989, MacPhail’s partnership with Ascension School is the oldest and most experienced in the area. Over the years, we have also developed a partnership with Harvest Best Academy, which also focuses on low-income students of color in grades 5-8. Programming at Ascension includes Sing Play Learn early childhood music and After-School Strings programs two to three days per week, with the opportunity for middle school students to perform with MNYO on Saturday rehearsals; Harvest students are also able to participate in MNYO.

In FY21, MacPhail is also unveiling several offerings led by Black, Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) staff, including significant development and expansion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts for our staff and students—which will include the hiring of a full-time Director of DEI to guide efforts—as well as our new Global Music Initiative (GMI) and Electronic Music Recording Arts (EMRA) program. These efforts will closely inform our ongoing work in North Minneapolis, enabling us to continue expanding unique music education experiences such as Beatboxing that are derived from a more diverse set of cultures than typical Western Classical traditions.

We continue to recognize the importance of working in low-income areas to create new access for music learning opportunities. By bringing our extensive experience in music education to North Minneapolis in a concentrated fashion, we are building alliances based on a shared motivation to improve the lives of not just individual students, but families and the entire North Minneapolis community. By offering open access to fresh perspectives on music education through excellent faculty, MacPhail's work in North Minneapolis will kindle the joy and community building of music where it is needed most.

Metallica Ponce  
4222 Humboldt Avenue N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55412  
T: (612) 704-1013  
E: [metallicaponce@gmail.com](mailto:metallicaponce@gmail.com)

Date: October 27, 2020

**VIA EMAIL TO: [ALYSSA.FRITZ@HOUSE.MN](mailto:ALYSSA.FRITZ@HOUSE.MN)**

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Select Committee on Racial Justice

Re: Urgent Legislative Proposal – Stop the Unconstitutional  
Selective Prosecution of Black Men by Amending Minnesota Statute 609.322.1a.

Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard and thank you in advance for your attention to this very urgent matter. Too often, we are on the wrong end of the events that lead to racial inequities in our state, responding to horrific video footage of unfair treatment of Black men rather than responding to culture and policies that lead to the unfair treatment of Black men, thus curtailing further unequal treatment in the streets, courts, and in every other forum. Here is a golden opportunity that we should not miss.

*The State of Minnesota is in need a politician who is not afraid to stand up for Equal Justice to draft some very important legislation at this time.* This must be acted upon swiftly in order to protect the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the United States Constitution's Equal Protection Clause and Article I, Section 2 of the Minnesota Constitution.

*Minnesota Statute 609.322.1a*, part of the State's Prostitution Code, severely penalizes any person who accepts monies from a someone working as a prostitute or otherwise solicits or promotes prostitution. In recent years, the State of Minnesota has amended it laws to raise the severity and penalty for anyone who violates this statute. In appearance, this was a noble gesture aimed at punishing the worst kinds of criminals in this country and protecting the most vulnerable.

But a close look at this law reveals a very sinister outcome, regardless of the true intent, and if this Country is going to seriously have a discussion about making the Criminal Justice System more fair and equal, no matter what their social standing or skin color, it must be done piecemeal – and this is an excellent starting point.

Far too often, in a prostitution scheme, the prostitute is a willing, criminal-minded adult woman who gains from the prostitution scheme along with the other co-conspirators involved. In many instances, the prostitute is trying to support drug habits, pay drug debts, secure housing, etc.

When a prostitute is arrested, alone and without accomplices, for prostitution in the State of Minnesota, she is charged with a gross misdemeanor for her actions. *But any time said prostitute has hired others or involved others in the scheme (for security purposes, advertising purposes, etc.), under Minnesota law, the prostitute is automatically absolved from any guilt, arbitrarily classified as a victim, and all other involved parties are prosecuted under a law that provides extremely harsh sentencing guidelines.* This rule of law has opened the door for the most egregious form of *Selective Prosecution*<sup>1</sup> that exists in the Nation at this time.

Reliable data will clearly demonstrate the fact that African-American men are, more often than not, the prostitute's accomplice in a prostitution scheme. Reliable data will also clearly show that, more often than not, the prostitute in a prostitution scheme is a white woman. Thus, the manner in which the State has fashioned and utilized Minnesota Statute 609.322.1a has a disparate impact on Black men and creates a “get out of jail free and don't be held responsible for your actions” card for white women. *Indeed, there are historical connotations here that cannot be ignored: A white woman willingly and knowingly engages in illicit behavior with a black man,*

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<sup>1</sup> A criminal defendant may establish a prima facie showing of Selective Prosecution by showing the *disparate impact* of a law and its enforcement, regardless of the State's intent. State v. Russell, 477 N.W.2d 886 (Minn. 1991).

*then the system allows the white woman to gain automatic immunity while severely punishing the black man.* This cannot be legally happening in the year 2020! We cannot wait for someone to successfully challenge this statute in the Courts under the doctrine of Selective Prosecution, we need legislation now in order to prevent irreparable harm to the Black community.

Additionally, the statute is overly broad: *Minnesota's Prostitution Code does not differentiate between prostitution schemes where the prostitute is a willing and even eager participant and schemes where said prostitute may be under coercion, threat of force, etc.* This seems insidious and intentional. These laws ignore the true realities of a prostitution scheme in favor of an idea that we know all too well: "Just lock the black guy up and that will fix it." As such, a white woman is free to monopolize in Minnesota's sex industry as long as she hires or involves someone else in the scheme – then, the law allows said prostitute to automatically, without any regard to the facts and circumstances of the prostitution scheme, which she may very well have masterminded herself, escape all responsibility for her actions. In fact, the law goes one step further and issues special rights to the white woman, and aggressively pursues the Black man in court. *It is reminiscent of the days where white women would have sex with Black men and, when discovered by the white man, the Black man then became the scapegoat and was mercilessly hung from a tree– even though they both chose to engage in illicit activity. The tree, in this case, is the Courts. The noose is the allegation that a Black man had the nerve to deal with a white woman.*

I live in North Minneapolis. I am a taxpayer and soon-to-be home owner. In the neighborhood where I reside, most of the kids are Black or Latino or Native American. My son is Black. If this State cannot come forward with the rest of the world when it comes to making genuine efforts to be fair to everyone in the Criminal Justice System – the only system that is authorized to legally kill and forever condemn citizens in this Country, then why am I voting and

paying taxes? Why are the people of color in this community participating in the political process if it is meaningless for our children, and we know that if they make one single mistake and have to deal with Minnesota's Criminal Justice System their life might be over? Or, if they are involved in a crime with a white person, particularly a non-violent crime, their penalties will amount to life in prison while their white accomplice receives "victims' rights" and automatic immunity. Does this neighborhood and community not have a voice? How is it that this State's judges and attorneys have acknowledged disparities in arrests, convictions, and sentencing in the State of Minnesota but there is no significant movement to change it?

I hereby respectfully pray that you will have the courage and the resolve and the humanity to draft a solution – whatever solution that you see fit and that will level out the playing field for all parties involved in charges under the subject statute so that the statute is not being used as a hangman's noose against Black men. I will be in touch.

Best wishes,

/s/Metallica Ponce  
Metallica Ponce  
4222 Humboldt Avenue N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55412  
T: (612) 704-1013  
E: [metallicaponce@gmail.com](mailto:metallicaponce@gmail.com)

Dear Chairs Moran, Richardson and Committee Members:

Thank you for your leadership and willingness to entertain public input.

I am the director of one of the six programs that comprise the Minnesota Family Resiliency Partnership (FKA Minnesota Displaced Homemaker Program).

We are a pre-employment program that helps families to stabilize after a major life transition such as death, disability, divorce, or abandonment so that they can enter or re-enter the workforce and move towards self-sufficiency. The overwhelming majority of people served are women. As a program we provide comprehensive and culturally relevant services to help address issues of structural racism experienced by women of color.

While it is likely stating the obvious to this committee, I wanted to share that the economic downturn due to the coronavirus pandemic is disproportionately impacting women, particularly women of color. Experts are referring to this as the "**she-cession**". **As of September 2020, women are at the lowest rate of workforce participation in a quarter of a century!** This pandemic has laid bare many of the inequities that have long existed.

According to an October 8<sup>th</sup> article in the Washington Post, ". . . women have been laid off at higher rates than men; women hold a larger share of low-wage, front-line jobs and women bear a disproportionate burden of child-care responsibilities. In September alone, 865,000 women age 20 and older dropped out of the labor force, **more than four times the number of men who exited.**

The numbers are even more grim for brown, black and indigenous women, close to a third of whom are employed in the service sector. Most of these women do not have the option to work remotely. What does that mean for a single mother whose children are required to participate in distance-learning? What happens to this family if mom gets exposed to the virus and becomes too ill to care for her children? These are some of the questions that the she-cession raises.

During the interim we have been working with Rep. Anne Clafin on these issues and she has really been engaged and helpful. The way forward is going to require bold policy responses if we are going to create an equitable and inclusive recovery.

The data shows us that the gains that women, particularly women of color, have made over the last several decades are being wiped out.

It is our recommendation that the legislature create an on-going racial justice committee so that all bills undergo a rigorous racial and intersectional analysis.

In our view it is imperative that funding be allocated to provide cultural sensitivity training that includes the perspective of a gender lens.

All Minnesota State Agencies should be required to conduct an intersectional equity analysis when considering policies.

Any member organization of the Minnesota Family Resiliency Partnership with its over 40 years of service would be happy to be a resource to the committee in any way you might deem helpful.

Thank you again for your time and leadership.

Respectfully,

**On Behalf of the Minnesota Family Resiliency Partnership**

Jean Keenan, Executive Director

Life-Work Planning Center

127 South Second St., Ste. 210

Mankato, MN 56001

(507) 345-1577

[www.lwpc.org](http://www.lwpc.org)



*Working to increase the self-sufficiency  
of women and their families.*

**LIFE-WORK PLANNING CENTER  
IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER  
AND SERVICE PROVIDER**

October 27, 2020

Alyssa Fritz  
Select Committee on Racial Justice

Dear members:

Hello, my name is Michelle Dreier, and I am the Member Engagement & Government Affairs Manager of the Electrical Association. 2021 will be my fifth legislative session with the association. Prior to working for the Electrical Association, I spent 23 years with the MN Department of Labor & Industry. Eighteen of those years were spent within the Division of Labor Standards & Apprenticeship. I have a passion for Workforce Development, sat of the Greater Metropolitan Workforce Council for several years, and have been working toward increasing diversity in the electrical industry for the past four years.

As you may know, electricians are predominately male and caucasian. It is an apprenticeable trade, requiring an apprentice to have 4 years or 8,000 of work experience directly supervised by a journeyworker electrician prior to applying to MN DLI to take the journeyworker license exam. Each journeyworker is limited to 2 apprentices in the field. Apprentices earn a living wage on the first day and quickly escalate to \$45 per hour or more as they demonstrate the ability to perform the work.

Transportation is the greatest limiting factor in finding a career in the electrical industry. Electricians must be able to transport themselves to the job site, which can change on a daily basis. Sometimes the obstacle is the inability to afford reliable transportation. There are some grant programs to help people overcome this obstacle. Other times the obstacle is obtaining a valid driver's license. Many fines attach driver's licenses for non-driving offenses. A big one of these is nonpayment of child support. While this penalty may force parents than can pay to pay, it can prevent the ability of some parents who can't pay to get to a job to be able to pay. In this case, it is very counterproductive. I met with Senator Dibble on this topic along with an individual from the unemployment division and Peg Thomas of Sundance Family Foundation. While we all agreed it was an important issue that needed addressing, we were missing a champion to drive it forward.

I also worked with Bob Tennesen on the Collateral Consequences of Conviction. Employment, housing, benefits can all be negatively impacted by criminal history, even if the crime has nothing to do with the decision about the individual. Employers use background checks as a way to weed through prospective applicants. This is my area of greatest expertise. I imagine the same could be said about housing. People should not have to pay for their crime after they have served their sentence. We need to allow people with criminal convictions to move forward with their lives and grow as individuals.

I live in the City of Mounds View where a low income apartment complex was recently built. When talking to the City Administrator, I asked if they were going to increase bussing to the area. His response was actually Metro Transit was planning to decrease bussing frequency. These housing developments should be planned where there is good access to public transportation.

Also, people that depend on public transportation are greatly disadvantaged when it comes to accessing medical care and juggling medical, family, and work. If it takes an hour one way to get to the doctor and back, an individual could easily lose a half a day's work or more to get health care. People that work 3<sup>rd</sup> shift do not have access to public transportation when their shift ends at 3 a.m. Single parents may not be able to juggle their commute and getting to their childcare in time. Those of us that drive daily take all of this for granted, myself included. I don't know how bus dependent individuals get things done.

Back to the diversification of electricians, I've found it very frustrating to open doors for people. Most positions are hired by word of mouth and not posted. While the reasons for this are not nefarious, it makes it very difficult for people to get their foot in the door without knowing somebody. It also makes it more likely that owners will hire people that look like themselves. I've tried to get past this by increasing visibility of people of color with my electrical contractors. It has worked for some.

There is a definite skill shortage in the electrical industry and lots of opportunities for economic stability. Most of my contractor members call me looking for journeyworkers. Lots of individuals contact me looking to be apprentices. The industry can only grow slowly as the required ratio prevents mass training of electrical apprentices. Those that get their foot in the door and stay in the industry will easily gain economic independence.

Transportation including public transportation, collateral consequences of conviction, housing availability and placement are all barriers to people of color trying to enter the trades. Add the inability to get the foot in the door, and there is no wonder these great paying jobs are still held predominately by white males. No college education is necessary. Living wage to start. Great possibilities of advancement, with a clear path to business ownership if someone desires to aspire to that level. Please use me as a resource if there is any way I can help clear a path to this prosperity.

Sincerely,

Michelle Dreier  
Member Engagement & Govt. Affairs Mgr.  
Electrical Association



October 26, 2020

Minnesota House of Representatives Select Committee on Racial Justice  
Re: Recommendations to address public health crisis of racism

Dear Co-Chairs Moran, Richardson, Demuth and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of reducing youth tobacco addiction and ending tobacco's harm for good. We thank this committee for working to address the systemic, institutionalized racism faced by Black Minnesotans, as well as American Indians and other communities of color.

This written comment reiterates the testimony provided during the October 13 hearing by coalition member LaTrisha Vetaw, Director of Health Policy and Advocacy at NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center.

Racism is a public health crisis. **One step Minnesota can take to address this crisis is clearing the market of all flavored tobacco products – especially menthol.**

For decades, the tobacco industry has deployed aggressive advertising in Black magazines and neighborhoods, and used other tactics designed to hook African Americans on menthol cigarettes. Today, 88 percent of Black smokers smoke menthols, compared to 22 percent of white smokers. The exclusion of menthol tobacco in a federal 2009 ban on flavored cigarettes has institutionalized these disparities and cost precious lives. One research study found that if menthol had been banned when all other cigarette flavors were disallowed, by 2050 there would be an estimated 10 percent reduction in overall smoking prevalence and up to 633,252 lives would have been saved, a third of whom would have been African Americans.

This deliberate targeting of Black people is unjust and lethal, but is something we can address by removing flavored tobacco products from the marketplace. To date, [17 Minnesota communities](#) have restricted the sale of flavored tobacco products, including major cities – St. Paul, Minneapolis and Duluth. At the State Capitol, a bill ([HF3032](#)) to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota passed two committees in the House this session but was not heard in the Senate.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for considering this important policy as one way to address systemic racism in our state. **As you finalize recommendations from the Select Committee, we hope you will include a measure to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota.** This policy would directly improve the health of Black, Indigenous and people of color, and through a policy that benefits the most impacted by health inequities and systemic racism, we will all benefit.

Sincerely,

Molly Moilanen  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Vice President, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>

Janelle Waldock  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Senior Director of Policy, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of  
Minnesota

### About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

*Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction, including increasing tobacco prices, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, limiting access to candy-, fruit- and menthol-flavored tobacco, and funding tobacco prevention and cessation programs.*

*Partners include: The African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, Allina Health | Aetna, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Becker County Energized, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Defense Fund-MN, Children’s Minnesota, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Education Minnesota, Essentia Health, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, A Healthier Southwest, HealthPartners, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISAIAH, JustUs Health, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, LPCFC – Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, March of Dimes, Masonic Cancer Center - University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, ModelCities, NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Open Cities Health Center, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health & Living, Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, ShiftMN, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life – Change is Possible, WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society. Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).*



## Minnesota School Psychologists Association

*School psychologists in Minnesota and the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA) Executive Board stand together with our BIPOC communities in outrage and heartbreak at the killing of George Floyd and the ensuing violence and destruction in our communities. We know that our children and families are suffering and we wish to offer support and healing.*

We recognize the need to address racial trauma or race-based trauma affecting many members of our community. If you are facing this or supporting others who are coping with this, you may benefit from resources available. In his *Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma*, Kenneth V. Hardy recommends several discrete steps for helping youth cope with racial trauma including:

- Affirmation and Acknowledgement: Acknowledge that race is a critical organizing principle in society. Allow conversations about race to emerge.
- Racial Storytelling: Share and invite stories with people you trust.
- Rechanneling Rage: The rage is valid, and rechanneling it can include activism, self-care, and focusing on your own strengths.

There are a variety of other resources for supporting children through racial trauma that are available on the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. MSPA seeks to engage in support and services to our communities now and in the coming months. Key features of this effort include:

- Having teacher and other adults learn about the effects of history and systemic racism,
- Honoring those impacts: make space for story sharing, offer empathy and understanding (while acknowledging that you may not fully understand).
- Empowering students at leaders.

MSPA implores those in positions of privilege to take steps to change the status quo. The organization stands ready to help in any way that it can by supporting students, teachers, and communities in comprehensive efforts overcome barriers to racial equality.



October 19, 2020

**To:** Representatives Rena Moran and Ruth Richardson, Chairpersons, Select Committee on Racial Justice  
**Cc:** Members of the Select Committee on Racial Justice  
**From:** Jordan Wildermuth, Nurse-Family Partnership  
**Re:** Policy recommendations to address racial disparities

Chairpersons Moran and Richardson,

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) recognizes that in Minnesota, significant racial disparities exist in maternal health outcomes. The leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths include hemorrhage, infection, embolism, preeclampsia and eclampsia, cardiovascular conditions, cardiomyopathy, and mental health conditions.

While some maternal mortality and morbidity is inevitable, there are opportunities to reduce preventable mortality and morbidity and to reduce longstanding inequities that lead to mortality and morbidity. Analyses suggest that the effects of structural racism are a root cause of maternal mortality and morbidity amongst women of color, particularly Black women, and these inequities persist across education and income levels.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Extend Medicaid coverage for pregnant women to 12 months postpartum.**

Extending Medicaid coverage would help women access the care they need to address health concerns well after their pregnancy ends. NFP encourages you to include this policy change again in your 2021-23 state budget.

### **2. Continue investment in evidence-based home visiting programs, specifically Nurse-Family Partnership.**

Over 40 years of research shows that NFP improves maternal health and birth outcomes, including reducing pregnancy-induced hypertension. NFP nurses play a crucial role in improving maternal health and will continue to be there for mothers when they need critical care and support to prevent maternal mortality.

### **3. Pursue innovative financing opportunities such as Social Impact Bonds**

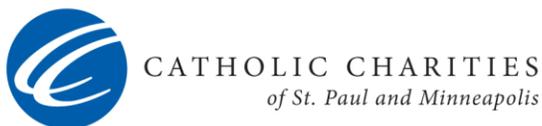
Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), also known as Pay for Success (PFS), are one kind of social innovation financing in which funds are raised from investors to supply a service provider with the working capital to deliver their services that will benefit society. Government is only required to pay back investors when the provider meets agreed-upon outcome metrics as determined by an independent evaluator. SIBs provide an opportunity to scale programs such as NFP to serve more vulnerable families. In 2011, Minnesota was the first state to pass legislation authorizing social impact financing through a state bond. However, Minnesota has yet to close an agreement to issue the appropriations bonds authorized in the Act.

Nurse-Family Partnership thanks this Committee for their attention to these recommendations and we appreciate the opportunity to work with you to address and overcome the racial disparities and social determinants that greatly impact maternal mortality. We hope to be a resource as you continue this work. Please contact me with any questions ([jordan.wildermuth@nursefamilypartnership.org](mailto:jordan.wildermuth@nursefamilypartnership.org)).

Sincerely,

Jordan Wildermuth, MSW  
Senior Government Affairs Manager  
Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office

1900 Grant Street, Suite 400 | Denver, CO 80203-4304  
303.327.4240 | Fax 303.327.4260 | Toll Free 866.864.5226  
[www.nursefamilypartnership.org](http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org)



1200 Second Avenue South  
 Minneapolis, MN 55403  
 612-204-8500  
 cctwincities.org

October 13, 2020

**House Select Committee on Racial Justice  
 Public Testimony from Shearise Jetoh, Property Manager, Higher Ground Minneapolis  
 Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis**

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Shearise Jetoh, Property Manager of Higher Ground Minneapolis residential housing for Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Catholic Charities serves nearly 23,000 children, families, and adults over the course of a year. Last year alone, we provided over 1.2 million meals and nearly 600,000 nights of supportive housing and emergency shelter. Over 70% of the people we serve are people of color.

This select committee has discussed at length the inequities experienced by people of color in Minnesota. Those inequities are very much represented in our housing sites and in our shelters. Those inequities often lead to people being our clients in the first place.

I'd like to share a story.

As property manager, I review countless housing applications from people with extremely challenging histories and deep needs for mental health, chemical dependencies, and more. People rent apartments from us because we try to provide the other help needed to be able to keep that apartment and find some real stability. There's plenty more I could say about this.

When I received an application from a woman in need of an apartment, I was immediately surprised that she would be applying at Catholic Charities. Her application showed 9 years of work history at the same employer in the suburbs. She had an 8-year rental history at the same apartment. She had a job. I ran her background study and literally it came back empty. Nothing.

While interviewing this woman I learned she applied to Catholic Charities because we are so low barrier, and she was facing homelessness. She had recently ended a relationship necessitating her move into a new home. She had applied at numerous apartment complexes in the suburbs to be close to her job. She was denied over and over, with a typical reason being her credit score wasn't high enough. At the time her credit was in the high 500s—not perfect, but with such strong rental and employment history, and a clean background check, this credit score should not have held her back.

She did get accepted at some locations where she felt unsafe. These were rundown buildings and not good for a single working woman.

She came to us to buy some time while she found a permanent home.

*Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.*

This was a black woman trying to live in a safe affordable apartment that was close to work. She was rejected over and over because of her credit score despite being a strong applicant and was never offered alternatives, like larger deposits or letters from her bank showing solid credit performance. Nothing.

In my professional opinion as a property manager who has seen it all, this woman was being discriminated against for being black.

There must be standards of fairness across rental properties that assure racism cannot be a factor in renting an apartment, the structural racism inherent in credit scores should be reformed or removed as a barrier, and landlords should strive for tenants like this woman, not the other way around.

Thank you very much for this opportunity and for your work.

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*Shearise Jetoh, Property Manager*  
*Higher Ground Minneapolis*  
*Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis*  
[Shearise.Jetoh@cctwincities.org](mailto:Shearise.Jetoh@cctwincities.org)  
*(612) 204-8432*

The Access Group  
501 North Dale Street  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
651) 403-2266  
Fmrrsbs@msn.com

October 13, 2020

Rep. Rena Moran (DFL) District: 65A  
Select Committee on Racial Justice Hearing  
575 State Office Building \*  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-5158  
E-mail: rep.rena.moran@house.mn

My Name is Fredrick Newell.

I am Pastor of True Spirit Ministries of St. Paul, Director of an advocacy group called The Access Group, and a State Licensed Residential Contractor. I provided verbal testimony before your committee on October 13, 2020. Herewith I provide a written copy.

As I stated at the beginning of my testimony, racism in America is a result of capitalism.

Its root is based in capitalism, the enslavement of a particular race of people for economic gain. The 1968 Congress took this fact into account when, by the Kerner Commission Report, it was informed that the infamous Watts Riots were a consequence of descendants of slave being denied access to economic opportunities.

This denial of opportunities was not an accident, but part of a systemic condition called racism in America.

The Congress enacted the federal statute 12 U.S.C. 1701u that directed economic opportunities generated by certain federal funds to low-income persons, particularly members of the protected class.

The resulting federal program was called Section 3. This federal program was supposed to lift Blacks (descendants of slave) by ensuring that they receive priority to training, jobs and contracting generated by certain funds. The federal government expends billions of dollars in the low-income [Black] communities each year but the benefits serve to support the suburbs and richer neighborhood. Through a refusal to support, enforce and comply with the federal program, the access roads have been diverted away from the low-income communities. Thus, racism continues to be fed from its root - capitalism.

This is a violation of the federal statute 12 USC 1701u and violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Laws of 1964.

According to the 2017 State Equity Audit and current data received from the MHFA Department, the State of Minnesota is in violation of the federal Section 3 requirements.

Section 3 is a civil rights-related-program-requirement which means a program violation is viewed by the federal government as an indicator that the federal fund recipient is potentially violating other civil rights laws.

The State of Minnesota should implement the Section 3 requirements as mandated by the funds it receive. The State should also incorporate the HUD Section 3 Protocols into its State Pre-Disaster Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan.

Respectfully,

Fredrick Newell

**TAG**

Cc: [Laura.Taken-Holtze@house.mn](mailto:Laura.Taken-Holtze@house.mn)

Bruce Corrie [corrie@csp.edu]



# THE CONSEQUENCES OF HISTORICAL RACISM, SEGREGATION, & TRAUMA

“

Elementary school students in the Twin Cities attend more racially segregated schools than they have in generations.  
- Star Tribune analysis, 2015

In Minnesota, almost twice as many Black children (58%) experience trauma compared to their White peers (31%).  
- National Survey on Children's Health, 2018

6x

A Black student is six times more likely to end up in the corrections system than in mental health treatment.  
- Intermediate District 287, 2019

The over-representation of students of color and American Indian students in special education services continues to serve a form of sanctioned segregation that is excluding students from their fundamental right to an education under Minnesota law.  
- Excluded, Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, 2018

”

## MINNESOTA'S HISTORY OF RACISM, SEGREGATION, & TRAUMA

### HAS LONG-STANDING CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO RECEIVE SETTING 4 EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR DISORDER (EBD) SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES



## THE CONSEQUENCES

STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO RECEIVE SETTING 4 EBD SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES ARE ARGUABLY THE **MOST UNDERSERVED AND MOST DISADVANTAGED** IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Exclusion of Students of Color from regular education into **segregated special education**

Perpetuation of **generational poverty**, housing insecurity, and limited access to services, such as health care



Collectively, systemic barriers have led to **fewer academic opportunities, the pipeline to prison, disproportional corrections involvement, trauma exposure, and loss of life/shorter life expectancy**

1

2

3

4

5

**Disproportionate** number of students of color receiving EBD services; these students have significantly **fewer academic opportunities** and some of the **worst outcomes in the nation**

**Failure of public education** to appropriately educate students, leading to significant academic opportunity gaps (time in class, outcomes, graduation, & post-school success)

### THERE IS A SOLUTION





# THERE IS A SOLUTION



A NEW PIPELINE

TO REDUCE THE CONSEQUENCES OF  
**HISTORICAL RACISM, SEGREGATION, & TRAUMA**



A **TRAUMA-SENSITIVE & HEALING-CENTERED** PROGRAM THAT EMBEDS **INNOVATIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

FOR STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE SETTING 4 EBD SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

## WHAT WORKS?

- SUPPORT FOR STAFF WELL-BEING
- TRAUMA-SENSITIVE & HEALING-CENTERED PRACTICES/ORGANIZATION
- HIGH-QUALITY, EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION DESIGNED FOR STUDENT NEEDS
- FAMILY & COMMUNITY AGENCY ENGAGEMENT
- AN ALIGNED FUNDING SYSTEM

## EXPECTED RESULTS



INCREASED EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, OUTCOMES, & RESULTS



MOVEMENT BACK TO INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS



ULTIMATELY, STUDENTS WHO CAN POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COMMUNITIES

**Intermediate District 287**

RESPONSIVE. INNOVATIVE. SOLUTIONS.

**RECOMMENDATION To:** Minnesota House of Representatives Select Committee on Racial Justice

**Submitted by** Deborah Jiang-Stein, CEO & Founder unPrison Project

After testifying at the October 13, 2020 hearing.

**Summary:**

A pilot program concerning women convicted of non-violent drug-related felony crimes; concerning sentencing and criminal procedure; relating to diversion agreements; supervision of people on diversion; certified drug abuse treatment programs.

Allow prosecutor's office to enter into agreements for stay of sentences with supervision of people and diversion to participate in certified drug treatment programs

**Proposition and Recommendation:**

To establish a non-prison sanction of certified drug abuse treatment programs for certain offenders who are sentenced on or after (date to be determined.)

To place female offenders in certified drug abuse treatment programs by the court, limited to placement of female adult offenders convicted of a non-violent felony violation where the offender is determined to have drug or alcohol addictions and such offender either has no prior felony conviction, or where previous convictions are for drug-related crimes.

**Current Context:** According to American Public Health Association, no progress has been made in the last decade in reducing the numbers of prisoners with substance abuse problems. 65 percent of the Minnesota prisoners and across the nation meet specific medical criteria for substance abuse and addiction but only 11 percent receive treatment for their addictions. BIPOC are sentenced and imprisoned at a rate of 5x more than whites with the same offenses. More than 85% of people in prison are parents of young children.

**The need:** The proportion of imprisoned women convicted of a drug offense has doubled over the last 20 years. Overall, BIPOC constitute approximately 40 percent of admissions into publicly funded substance abuse treatment programs, compared to the rate of imprisonment which is 6x that of whites.

**The problem:** Of the 419 adult female offenders in MCF-Shakopee, 245 are serving sentences for drug offenses. Data from every justice department indicates that people of color have similar rates of SUD (substance abuse disorder) as white people but are disproportionately impacted with incarceration.

**The solution:** Provide court-ordered participation in long-term treatment and rehabilitation with certified drug abuse treatment programs, to include mental health treatment with a gender-specific trauma-healing service, for women convicted of felony crimes that are drug-related. Treatment programs that are mandated by the criminal justice system may provide access to individuals either resistant to care or otherwise unable to access care.

**Value to the community:** This proposed treatment alternative to prison for SUD individuals will keep families united, and the generational impact of trauma from parental incarceration, especially of mothers, will change communities for generations to come.

**Evaluation and outcomes:** To be determined by guidelines from the certified treatment facilities involved.

**Goals:**

- (1) To address racial disparities and close the gap of numbers in prison between BIPOC and whites.
- (2) To reduce recidivism.
- (3) Increase recovery for offenders with drug-related felony convictions



House of Representatives Committee on Racial Justice  
Hearing – October 13, 2020

*Presented by Ruby Lee, CLUES President & CEO*

GOOD AFTERNOON, MADAM CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. MY NAME IS RUBY LEE AND I AM PRESIDENT OF CLUES – COMUNIDADES LATINAS UNIDAS EN SERVICIO (OR LATINO COMMUNITIES UNITED IN SERVICE). THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIFT THE VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY LATINOS AND IMMIGRANTS.

CLUES WAS FOUNDED 40 YEARS AGO TO ADDRESS CULTURAL AND BILINGUAL INEQUITIES EXPERIENCED BY LATINOS IN MINNESOTA – TODAY, OUR ORGANIZATION SERVES CLOSE TO 20,000 PEOPLE ANNUALLY IN THE AREAS OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, BEHAVIORAL & COMMUNITY HEALTH, FAMILY STABILITY AND ADVOCACY/LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT. WE HAVE OFFICES IN MINNEAPOLIS, SAINT PAUL, WILLMAR, AND AUSTIN, MINNESOTA. OUR TWO-GENERATION SERVICE APPROACH AIMS TO PROVIDE INTERVENTIONS THAT MOVE PARENTS AND CHILDREN OUT OF POVERTY WHILE PROVIDING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS THAT FOSTER SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND WELLNESS.

- 1. I'M HERE TODAY TO ASK THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER DRAFTING LEGISLATION THAT INVESTS DIRECTLY IN STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND NATIVE AMERICAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS, LIKE CLUES.**

BY INVESTING IN STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, YOU ARE ALSO BUILDING COMMUNITY WHILE REDUCING LARGE GAPS FACED BY PEOPLE OF COLOR AND NATIVE COMMUNITIES. MOST OF US (COMMUNITY-BUILDING CBO'S) ARE ASKED TO SUBSIDIZE GOVERNMENT GRANTS THAT ONLY FUND SERVICES AND DON'T PROVIDE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO COVER OUR REAL COSTS OR DELIVER TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT. WE NEED AN INTENTIONAL "REDISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS" TO CULTURALLY SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS TO REDUCE RACIAL INEQUITIES AND FOSTER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY FOR THE LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WE SERVE.

2. **WE NEED LEGISLATION THAT INTENTIONALLY CULTIVATES ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE** FOR THOSE WHO ARE TRADITIONALLY MARGINALIZED DUE TO RACE OR CULTURE. RESOURCES MUST BE TARGETED THROUGH TRUSTED COMMUNITY-BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS (NOT ONLY CDFI'S) WITH INTENTIONAL TARGETED FUNDS THAT FOSTER ASSETS AND PROSPERITY. COMMUNITY-BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS KNOW BEST HOW TO INCUBATE NEW ASSET-BUILDING MODELS THAT WORK.
3. **TO CREATE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND SYSTEMS' CHANGE** LEGISLATORS NEED TO TARGET LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDS THROUGH ORGANIZATIONS THAT:
- BUILD EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE SKILLS TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO MOVE THROUGH NEW INCOME LADDERS,
  - SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES AND THE CAPACITY OF CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC-LED ORGANIZATIONS TO BE ON THE DRIVER SEAT.
  - TARGET FUNDS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO CHILDCARE IN NEW WAYS AND THROUGH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INITIATIVES WHERE UNDERSERVED WORKING-PARENTS CAN LEAD AND BE SUPPORTED.
  - INVEST DECREASING TECHNOLOGY DISPARITIES DUE TO POVERTY OR GEOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES. SUPPORT CAREER-DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS PROGRAMS THAT OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THESE INEQUITIES.

I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUED CONVERSATION TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS AND CONCRETE BENCHMARKS OF SUCCESS TO RESTORE EQUITY IN COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR MINNESOTANS.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.



December 1, 2020

Minnesota House of Representatives Select Committee on Racial Justice  
Re: Recommendations to address public health crisis of racism

Dear Co-Chairs Moran, Richardson, Demuth and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of reducing youth tobacco addiction and ending tobacco's harm for good. We thank this committee for working to address the systemic, institutionalized racism faced by Black Minnesotans, as well as American Indians and other communities of color.

This written comment reiterates our October 24 letter and October 13 testimony by coalition member LaTrisha Vetaw, Director of Health Policy and Advocacy at NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center.

Racism is a public health crisis and commercial tobacco addiction is a major driver of health disparities. Minnesota's progress reducing smoking has stalled, and youth e-cigarette rates have erased nearly two decades of progress to reduce youth tobacco use. In particular, the tobacco industry continues to profit from addiction and disease disproportionately borne by the communities they target – including LGBTQ+, Black, American Indian and other communities of color.

**Minnesota can address the crisis of racism and commercial tobacco use by clearing the market of menthol and all flavored tobacco products and investing in tobacco prevention and cessation programs that promote health equity.**

For decades, the tobacco industry has deployed aggressive advertising in Black magazines and neighborhoods, and used other tactics designed to hook African Americans on menthol cigarettes. Among Minnesota adults, unpublished data found 88 percent of Black smokers smoke menthols, compared to 21 percent of white smokers. Nationally, among those over 12 years old, 85 percent of African American smokers smoke menthols, versus 29 percent of white smokers. The exclusion of menthol tobacco in a federal 2009 ban on flavored cigarettes has institutionalized these disparities. If the federal government had in 2010 banned menthol, by 2050 there would be a 10 percent reduction in overall smoking prevalence and up to 633,252 lives would be saved, a third of which would be African Americans.

Among American Indians in Minnesota, smoking rates remain at epidemic levels. An estimated 59 percent of American Indians smoke, versus 14 percent of Minnesota adults overall. Unfortunately, these disparities start young. The 2019 Minnesota Student Survey found 38 percent of American Indian students were current tobacco users. More should be done to combat these disparities and empower affected communities.

The CDC recommends that Minnesota spend \$53 million per year in order to have an effective, comprehensive tobacco control program. Unfortunately, Minnesota will spend only a fraction of that amount (\$12.4 million), despite taking in \$780 million last year in tobacco taxes and settlement fees. State funding will decline further after ClearWay Minnesota sunsets at the end of 2021. There is an urgent need to invest more state funds in tobacco prevention and treatment, to combat the youth tobacco epidemic and address tobacco-related health disparities.

Deliberate tobacco industry targeting of Black people, American Indians and other communities of color is unjust and lethal. Thankfully, we can address this problem by removing flavored tobacco products from the marketplace and funding prevention. These strategies will also help reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic.

Lowering smoking rates and easing health disparities would create improved health outcomes, reduced inequities and lower healthcare costs that would benefit all Minnesotans. Addressing commercial tobacco use would also help combat COVID-19, since current or former smokers are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for considering this important policy as one way to address systemic racism in our state. **As you finalize recommendations from the Select Committee, we hope you will include measures to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota and invest in tobacco prevention and cessation.**

Sincerely,



LaTrisha Vetaw  
Co-Chair, Menthol Coalition  
  
Director of Health Policy and  
Advocacy, NorthPoint Health and  
Wellness Center



Molly Moilanen  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Vice President, ClearWay  
Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>



Janelle Waldock  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Senior Director of Policy, Blue  
Cross and Blue Shield of  
Minnesota

### **About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation**

*Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction, including increasing tobacco prices, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, limiting access to candy-, fruit- and menthol-flavored tobacco, and funding tobacco prevention and cessation programs.*

*Partners include: The African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, Allina Health | Aetna, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Becker County Energized, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Defense Fund-MN, Children’s Minnesota, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Education Minnesota, Essentia Health, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, A Healthier Southwest, HealthPartners, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISIAAH, JustUs Health, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, LPCFC – Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, March of Dimes, Masonic Cancer Center - University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, ModelCities, NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Open Cities Health Center, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health & Living, Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, ShiftMN, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life – Change is Possible, WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society. Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).*

## Submission by AspireMN:

### Support, Stability, and Maintaining Family Connections: Resources for (formal) Kinship Caregivers DRAFT – October, 2020

#### Context:

As Kinship Caregiving continues to expand in Minnesota, it is critically important that our systems shift and develop the needed capacity to actively support kin as they navigate the complexities of parenting children who are dear to them.

There are great inconsistencies in how kinship caregivers are supported across the state of Minnesota, based on disparate resources available from county to county, available local support, and varied policy implementation.

The following proposal outline speaks to the importance of consistent, well-designed, family-focused supports that can help kinship caregivers gain the needed resources so that they can nurture the children newly in their care, and sustain their caregiving while supporting reunification or later considered a permanency option within their family.

#### Priority Policy Areas for Kinship Caregivers:

- Statewide contracting for kinship licensing support for – to deliver uniform access statewide for kinship caregivers seeking support from a community based organization charged with actively assisting the family through:
  - Child Foster Care Licensing Support (including seeking variance, kinship-related training and support services, and other required problem solving)
  - Case management to meet child(ren) and family needs
  - Active family support to meet unique needs, problem solve and focus creative energies on sustaining family integration (preventing disruption)
- Warmline support for kinship navigation, available to families 24/7; focus on informal and formal caregivers in need of information, resources, and direction to assist them as they raise children whose biological parents are unable to actively parent for a period of time. (200K)
- Policy change to reflect Minnesota's change in practice of increased placements with kinship caregivers, to require:
  - Uniform practice: ***processes that ensure that relative search is thoroughly and legitimately conducted; prioritizing kin for consideration within all process steps*** (with goal of continuous engagement of the relative in the life of the child – and for consideration of placement as circumstances change)
  - Timely reporting (specific measures to be identified: eg demonstration of early communication with kin, etc) in SSIS on active kin engagement
  - Best practice: Engage kin families throughout the process, identify ways for kin to be part of the child(ren)'s life, including if they are not the placement option.

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Rep. Rena Moran, Chair  
The Honorable Rep. Ruth Richardson, Chair  
House Select Committee on Racial Justice  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Access to Dental Care for Communities of Color**

Dear Rep. Moran and Rep. Richardson:

Thank you so much for chairing the House Select Committee on Racial Justice. We appreciate the work that you and your colleagues on the committee are doing in addressing these important issues in our community.

We, the undersigned dental providers, make up the Minnesota Safety Net Oral Health Alliance (the “Oral Health Alliance), a coalition of critical access dental providers who provide oral health care to underserved communities across the state. As a coalition, we provided care to over 250,000 patients in 2019. Safety net dental providers like us serve approximately two-thirds of all state program enrollees in Minnesota. We utilize a variety of evidence-based models—including permanent brick-and-mortar clinics, spoke-and-hub service delivery models, or teledentistry—which enable us to reach people in the most remote parts of Minnesota. The Oral Health Alliance is currently working with other safety net providers on developing an oral health home which would seek to improve health outcomes for low income children and families. Our organizations have led the way in innovation and efficiency for years by utilizing approaches such as collaborative hygienists, expanded functions, and dental therapists to maximize patient access, reduce the burden on hospital emergency rooms, and to most effectively benefit to Minnesota taxpayers.

We are writing to you today to highlight the work of the Critical Access Dental (CAD) program and the importance of the program to communities of color in Minnesota. The CAD program successfully provides funding to support the work of oral health providers who serve substantial numbers of people who are enrolled in government programs. The CAD program has been in existence for almost three decades having been established with the goal of increasing dental access to underserved populations. CAD has assured the fiscal sustainability of the safety net providers that offer dental services to adults and children who lack insurance, those who live in rural communities or who are enrolled in a state public program—all of whom are disproportionately people of color. Any dental provider that serves a substantial percentage of these patients is able to apply for the enhanced CAD rate.

We are very concerned that the looming budget deficit may elicit proposals that would cut or eliminate CAD funding. If this were to occur, many safety net dental providers would be forced to substantially reduce the numbers of people that they serve, or even close their doors entirely. This would mean a huge gap in dental access for the patients we serve, many tens of thousands

of whom are people of color, from indigenous or refugee populations, disabled, or do not speak English as a first language. We implore you to help us protect this program from cuts during the coming legislative session.

We stand ready to work with you to improve access to oral health and would be happy to discuss more options to better the lives of all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

### The Minnesota Safety Net Oral Health Alliance



## **Presentation to MN House Select Committee on Racial Justice 11.24.20 (Via Zoom)**

**By: James Trice, CEO of Public Policy Project**

First, I want to thank the Minnesota House of Representatives for their important groundbreaking decision to declare racism a public health crisis. This decision is a big victory in our nations long history fighting to end structural and systemic racism and bringing about racial justice.

In 2003, I created Public Policy Project an independent provider of public policy consulting, leadership training, civic engagement training, lobbying, environmental and social justice, strategic planning and advocacy services addressing policy issues impacting African Americans, Indigenous people, other communities of color and low-income communities. Public Policy Project provides a vehicle for these communities to understand both the role of public policy in shaping their experience of oppression and marginalization, and the opportunity to generate improved policy platforms that better promote their well-being.

Public Policy Project in partnership with Pillsbury United Communities anchored the Environmental Justice Coordinating Council and support residents in North Minneapolis in taking charge of their own environmental justice destiny. The EJCC is an entirely African American leadership base of environmental and social justice agents of change, working cooperatively to understand and address the environmental justice overburden in North Minneapolis.

Since its launch in November 2017, the EJCC has achieved the following outcomes:

- a) The EJCC played the lead role in establishing the Northern Metals Advisory Council on which 1 EJCC member sits. The NMAC, through a series of ten stakeholder meetings we facilitated, determined how to allocate funds from the Northern Metals Consent Decree (a metal shredder violating pollution standards) to address lead poisoning and asthma triggers.

- b) The EJCC played the lead role in generating the authorizing resolution for a North Minneapolis Green Zone Task Force, on which 5 EJCC members sit. The GZTF developed twelve objectives and is now acting upon 6 priority areas.
- c) The EJCC also played a key role as a catalyst for a different model of development occur on the Upper Harbor Terminal – a 48.8 acre site in our community offering a once in a generation opportunity for a major –scale tipping point caliber development initiative that could positively or negatively impact the future of our community.
- d) The EJCC played a lead role in establishing the Environmental Justice Partnership, which bridges mainstream environmental NGOs across Minnesota with environmental justice communities. The EJP brought organizations together with environmental justice leaders to consider actions to advance finance, policy, shared leadership, and results in environmental justice across Minnesota

In these four areas above, the EJCC has centered the perspectives of African American community residents, challenged mainstream perspectives on policy and practice, and acted as catalysts for different ways of considering and addressing environmental and population health.

We recognize that people have been doing environmental justice work for generations in countries around the world and across the nation, in tribal communities, and in Minnesota, and yet this remained largely separate from – and marginalized by – most environmental organizations and funders. For too long, white-dominated environmental organizations have allowed the environmental justice community to be sidelined, and thus chronically under-resourced, which has undermined the ability for talented and knowledgeable people of color and indigenous people to lead the work locally, statewide and nationally. Mainstream environmental organizations that focus on traditional environmental problems like land, water and air have privileged connections and relationships with funders and decision makers.

Many of these organization have reinforced ecological apartheid by failing to lead from a broader definition of 'the environmental' and failing to deeply partner with environmental justice communities to promote an ecologically wise and just environmental movement.

We have taken up difficult work and made it work. The Northern Metals Consent Decree required Northern Metals to pay \$2.5 million in penalties for violating environmental standards. Only \$600,000 of the amount came to the community so it could make recommendations to the City of Minneapolis on how to best promote lead poisoning education and testing and asthma triggers education and mitigation in the community. Over the course of 18 months, the community successfully formed a Northern Metals Advisory Council, which met 12 times to hear community input on how best to address lead and asthma. It made recommendations to the City on how to allocate funds in the fall of 2019 and is now monitoring the work of community partners working in partnership with the City to carry out the objectives defined for lead poisoning testing and education, and asthma triggers education and mitigation.

We intervened in the development of the Upper Harbor Terminal and challenged the conventional approach to development offered and got the City, community and development partners to use a series of 12 Learning Tables through which we have helped the community think critically about land use, about stormwater, and park space, about ecological design for the site as a whole, about the appropriate business and affordable housing mix, and about the infrastructure needed to provide access to and ecological integrity of the site. We promoted six design objectives incorporated in the Concept Plan for the Upper Harbor: disrupt gentrification and prevent displacement; racial equity and justice; community ownership; environmental justice and sustainability; affordable housing; and valuing public space and infrastructure.

We developed a set of recommendations for appropriate development in the community, which we offered to the City of Minneapolis to consider how to respond to. Our recommendations included: community engagement before the City commits to development projects that impact the community; adequate resources to support

substantive community engagement on the front-end, and throughout the lifecycle of development projects; designing in community ownership and partnership opportunities that ensure community job creation, business development and community wealth building; and impact assessments on environment, equity, economy, transportation, contribution to reduction of racial disparities, and an anti-displacement commitment.

Stakeholders in the community came together and developed a vision for an Applied Environmental Impact Center as an integral feature in the Upper Harbor Terminal development. This center will provide a food business incubator, a greenhouse, an aquaponics facility, an environmental learning center, co-working space for environmental and social entrepreneurs in the community, and a training facility for young people to partner with our regional experts in soil, air and water quality improvement to get on on-ramps to environmental careers.

Fue Lee, State Representative for House District 59A has championed environmental justice and fought for passage of legislation to advance our objectives. Fue Lee, our State Representative, graciously listened to community and took our concerns straight to the legislature. House Files 2738, (Headwaters Community Food and Water Economic Resiliency Program); 2778 (requiring analysis of cumulative pollution and health impact from polluting industries in the community); 3058 authorizing denial of permits by the Pollution Control Agency when it deems offering, extending or expanding a permit may negatively impact air quality in the community.

We face daunting challenges related to the way we care for the natural world and the things we share. We also have gaping disparities in the distribution of wealth, power, and opportunity that result in gaping health disparities, injustice, suffering and conflict. These critical challenges overlap, intertwine and are urgent. It is critical to address these challenges with an appreciative approach that starts with honoring full engagement from, and leadership by environmental justice communities across Minnesota.

### **Recommendations to the Select Committee on Racial Justice:**

- Support HF 2738 (Headwaters Community Food and Water Economic Resiliency Program) authored by Representative Fue Lee and other legislation that address environmental hazards in black, brown and indigenous communities across Minnesota.
- Establish Green Zones (similar to Minneapolis) in black, brown, indigenous, rural, and marginalized communities throughout Minnesota.
- Work with Public Policy Project to launch Environmental Justice Coordinating Councils (EJCC) in environmental justice communities throughout Minnesota.
- Redefine 'environment' to include more than just air, water, and soil quality. Black, brown and indigenous communities see all issues as environmental issues.

I can be reached by email at: [James\\_publicpolicyproject@msn.com](mailto:James_publicpolicyproject@msn.com)

Phone: 612.702.9769

Website: [www.ppp-ejcc.com](http://www.ppp-ejcc.com)