

February 19, 2019

Honorable Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, and Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage have the important role as state agencies to advise and inform elected officials about our constituent communities and their needs. Students from our communities currently represent 34% of all students in schools across Minnesota. It is with this in mind that we write today to ask that you support the 2020 Increase Teachers of Color Act (H.F. 3201).

While the percentage of students of color and American Indian students in the state has increased from 24% to 34% over the past decade, the percentage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers has remained stagnant at 4%. Thus, the top priority in education that has united our four Councils over the previous biennium has been the need to increase teachers of color and American Indian teachers (TOCAIT).

In 2016 adopted state law, several statutes were amended ensuring all students have “improved and equitable access to effective and diverse teachers” who reflect the diversity of students in their schools. Providing all students with equitable access to teachers of color and indigenous teachers is something our state has yet to do in order to narrow our state’s persistent opportunity and achievement gaps, which are among the worst in the country for our constituent communities. We must do things differently as a state if we expect different results in narrowing equity gaps, and one of the key things that our state has not addressed systemically is the persistent shortage of TOCAIT.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you fully support the policy language in H.F. 3201 that will strengthen program investments and address systemic barriers to TOCAIT recruitment, preparation, and retention while also addressing factors that contribute to achievement gaps that deeply impacts students from our communities. The comprehensive set of policy proposals in H.F. 3201 has been informed by feedback from hundreds of members and educators from of our communities over the past three years and has been vetted and endorsed by more than two dozen important organizations.

Among the important provisions in this bill is language that would require districts to have plans to ensure that curriculum as well as learning and work environments are inclusive and respectful of all racial and ethnic groups. An inclusive and respectful school climate and curriculum is imperative to TOCAIT retention efforts as well as to improved engagement of all students and their parents.

An additional critical component of this legislation would establish a state goal to increase the percentage of TOCAIT each year and have a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of K12 students by 2040. This language would ensure that there is urgency at all levels to intentionally and legitimately address the state’s chronic shortage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers.

Thank you for your leadership in doing what is right for the success of all students by fully supporting H.F. 3201.

Sincerely,

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Rosa Tock | Executive Director | Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
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