

March 12, 2019

Honorable Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

This letter is to strongly endorse and thank you for including several key policy provisions from the 2019 Increase Teachers of Color Act (H.F. 824) in your omnibus bill H.F. 1711.

As we testified a couple of weeks ago, during the positive hearing on H.F. 824, this set of comprehensive policy proposals—built on consensus and feedback from hundreds of community and organizational stakeholders—will do much to address many of the most significant barriers to increasing teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota, which remain at only 4% of the teacher workforce. Addressing this shortage, as well as many of the policy provisions you’ve included in this omnibus bill, will also address factors that contribute to the “underachievement” of students from our constituent communities.

In particular, the following important sections in H.F. 1711 will help attract, prepare and retain a teaching workforce that more closely reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of our state’s students.

Article 2, Section 6 & 7 (pp 13-14)

Amends existing **World’s Best Workforce** statute 120B.11, subdivision 2 so district strategic plans include:

- Practices that integrate inclusive and respectful learning and work environments for all students, families, and employees.
- Strategies for improving instruction, curriculum, and student achievement that include culturally relevant or ethnic studies curriculum using culturally responsive teaching methods.
- Also amends 120B.11, subdivision 3 so district advisory committees’ recommendations include strategies to ensure the curriculum and learning and work environments are inclusive and respectful toward all racial and ethnic groups.

Article 3, Section 1 (pp 26-27)

Establishes a state goal to increase overall percent of TOCAIT at least 2 percentage points per year, and directs PELSB to **publish a report** in collaboration with state agencies administering various state grant programs that intend to increase TOCAIT in light of state goal.

Article 3, Section 27 (pp 39-40)

Amends **Exams Required for Tier 4 Licensure** (122A.185) so that:

- An employing school or district may verify through job performance a Tier 3 teacher’s satisfactory skills in reading, writing, and mathematics for teaching in the licensure field so the teacher may obtain a Tier 4 license; and
- Testing centers must provide monthly opportunities for untimed skills exams.

Article 3, Section 39-43 (pp 53-55)

Amends existing **American Indian Teacher Preparation Programs** statute 122A.63 to allow more programs to be supported, and clarifies eligible grantees and programming.

Article 3, Section 44 (pp 55-57)

Amends existing **Teacher Mentorship and Retention of Effective Teachers** statute 122A.70 to allow existing funds and new programs that focus efforts to help retain effective teachers, including:

- Paying stipends to mentor teachers, including incentives for racially diverse mentors
- Assisting teachers from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to gather and support each other throughout the school year in professional learning community affinity groups across schools within and between districts
- Grants supporting licensed and non-licensed educator participation in professional development (workshops and graduate courses) related to closing opportunity and achievement gaps
- Also affirms that districts may negotiate for diverse teachers to be protected from layoffs in the beginning years of employment and provided financial incentives for teaching at least 5 years.

Article 3, Section 45 (pp 57-58)

Amends existing **“Intro to Teaching” Concurrent Enrollment Courses** statute 124D.09 to allow districts and schools to be eligible grant recipients to implement these courses, not just higher education institutions, and requires grant recipients to report number of diverse students earning post-secondary credit ensuring efforts made to enroll a majority students of color.

Article 3, Section 46 (pp 58-60)

Amends existing **Achievement and Integration program** statute 124D.861 to specify that plans must include strategies to make schools’ curriculum and learning and work environments more inclusive and respectful of students’ racial and ethnic diversity, and to address structural inequities that create opportunity and achievement gaps. Provides several possible activities for plans.

Article 3, Section 47 (pp 60-62)

Amends existing **Student Teacher Candidate Grants in Shortage Areas program** statute 136A.1275 to clarify intent and targeting financial support to most needed licensure shortage areas in the state as well as racially diverse candidates.

Article 3, Sections 48-52 (pp 62-64)

Amends existing **Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program** statute 136A.1791 to focus eligibility on licensure areas specific to economic development regions where teachers work along with demographic shortages, and increases support up to \$2,000/year for up to 10 years for each shortage area eligibility met.

The State Ethnic Councils as state agencies have the important role to advise and inform elected officials and stakeholders about our constituent communities and their needs. We appreciate the Committee’s responsiveness to our strong recommendations on solutions to address our state’s severe shortage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers, which has been our top priority in education over the last and current biennium.

We look forward to working with members of the Conference Committee to ensure that these policies get signed into law.

Sincerely,

Violeta Hernández Espinosa | Education Legislative Director | Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
Sia Her | Executive Director | Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans
Justin Terrell | Executive Director | Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage