

Capital Investment Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Saint Paul, MN 55155



March 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Lee, Vice Chairwoman Murphy, and Colleagues,

The Southeast Community Council (SECO), also known as the District 1 Community Council, serves residents in the southeast area of St. Paul. We are writing a letter to support Funny Asian Women Kollektive's efforts to build an Asian American Center for Media and the Arts (AACMA).

We already know that two of the artists, May Lee-Yang and Saymoukda Vongsay, live on the eastside of St. Paul, and are community advocates and leaders. The Executive Director of SECO has known both professional artists for about ten years. Our organization had the opportunity to host FAWK in our neighborhood over the winter. They performed their outdoor "Trunk Show" in the parking lot of Sun Ray Shopping Center, which is one of our community hubs. Considering the cold temperatures, the performance attracted at least three dozen viewers who were walking by and who pulled up in their vehicles to watch. This is exactly the way we need to activate eastside spaces that have been neglected for far too long.

On the eastside, we don't have a local arts or culture organization with a consistent presence. In fact, there is essentially only one small arts organization that serves the eastside, and their work is fairly limited and confined to a small area. Yet, we know that the arts are a key factor in building community through creative engagement that spans race, age and culture.

FAWK's vision to build an Asian American art center will have a positive impact for the eastside of St. Paul; an area of wide disinvestment within our city. In fact, we've had conversations with a local Hmong community who have been looking for space for youth dance practice and youth tutoring. They are unable to use the recreation centers because they don't have the funds to pay for space. A center that offers space, led by women who represent so many of our community members, is much needed. Eastside residents will benefit from performance, gallery, and studio spaces for artists, and serve as a means for building community. The space will be a destination location that can bring much needed money to local businesses that benefit from an increased number of visitors, in addition to the jobs and opportunities that the center will provide.

This art center will also impact St. Paul and the greater state of Minnesota because there isn't currently a centralized hub for Asian American artmaking. This space can be both an incubator of new work and a place where others learn from each other. Lastly, it is more important now than ever to have support community projects that are led by women leaders and leaders of color who are already doing work on the ground.

We are happy to host a community discussion to talk more about the project and its possibilities

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Mowry Voss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Betsy" being the most prominent.

Betsy Mowry Voss  
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