

## **Recommendations from the GOP Members of the Racial Justice Committee**

### **Education Reform**

The committee heard from testifiers throughout the past five hearings about the importance of education reform. During the October 6, 2020 hearing, Carly Bad Heart Bull testified that “research indicates that education is the strongest predictor of long-term health.” We also heard recommendations during the public testimony about the need for education reform in order to recruit, train, and retain teachers of color and to focus on school choice and maintain charter schools. Our education recommendations are as follows:

#### **1. Teachers of Color**

Creating a more equitable public school system needs to see a teaching professional that reflects the students in the classroom. The current percentage of teachers of color of only four to six percent is both an embarrassment and barrier for students of all backgrounds. The research is clear that teachers of color not only benefit students of color, but all students.

##### *Teacher Tenure Reform – Ending the Practice of Last In, First Out*

Prior to 2018, Minnesota Statutes mandated a seniority-based system for handling staff reductions. In other words, an educator’s date of hire, was considered more valuable in state law than qualifications or even teacher effectiveness, and other measures of merit. This became known as “Last In, First Out” (LIFO) in reference to the last hired teacher was first to be dismissed.

Despite the change in state law, these policies and practices remain relics in collective bargaining contracts, which is allowed as the repeal on the state mandate still allowed for a locally bargained policy. So long as these antiquated retention policies remain in place no number of teacher recruitment and certification programs will be effective if we continue show our teachers of color the door out after working so hard to bring them in.

To accomplish, we need to take the next step and prohibit the antiquated use of LIFO in determining which teachers should remain in the classroom.

##### *New Tiered Licensing System*

In 2017, the State Legislature established a new four-tiered licensing system to create multiple pathways for quality educators of various backgrounds and career paths to enter the classroom. This reform is already showing promise in opening new doors for more teachers of color.

To continue opening these doors to more teachers of color, the current statutes governing the tiered licensing system, specifically those defining the Tier 1 and Tier 2 license should be maintained. Efforts to repeal or substantially revise these licenses would likely close off a critical pathway to more teachers of color.

#### **2. School Choice**

Opportunity and equity in life begins with opportunity and equity in education. End the practice of educational redlining that limits opportunities for students of color. Discriminatory housing practices, both past and present, are the main determinant in the quality of education accessible to

students. Neighborhoods lacking opportunity will likely have neighborhood schools reflecting that lack of opportunity. Attempts to redraw school boundaries and change bus routes have had little effect on improving access to a quality education.

Minnesota has a robust public school choice program with a network of Charter schools, and open enrollment options. However, those options remain limited for communities of color. To expand opportunity and equity, Minnesota should expand school choice to not only be limited to public options. This can be accomplished through a variety of program options including Opportunity Scholarships, Scholarship Foundations, and expansions of the education tax credit.

### **3. Civics Education Expanded**

Expanding opportunity for communities of color requires expanding access to their duly elected government. This begins with not only a technical knowledge of how a republican form of government works, but how individuals and groups of individuals can access and influence policies and priorities. This begins with education; it begins with civics – which is literally defined as the study of the rights and duties of citizens.

Minnesota currently includes civics within the K-12 education system as part of the state’s social studies standards. To obtain a high school graduation, a high school student must obtain 3.5 credits in social studies, which includes civics, and also history, and economics. However, there is no specific requirement for high school students to take a course in government. As students approach high school graduation, they also approach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday that comes with the right to vote for citizens.

A lesson in civics lends itself perfectly to experiential or practical learning through active participation with local government and the practice of free speech.

### **Economic Development**

During the Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup> hearing, we heard compelling testimony from Dr. Corrie regarding the importance of community assets. The state currently partners with community organizations and nonprofits that provide banking assistance, small business planning, financial advice, and revolving loan funds for entrepreneurs from communities of color. We recommend working to expand awareness of these existing community organizations and resources, this is something the state could do through public awareness campaigns and in collaboration with community leaders and partner organizations. Additionally, as the state recently passed legislation requiring more transparent reporting for organizations that receive state funding through DEED, we recommend using these reports to prioritize future funding for the organizations which show high returns on investment and effective use of state funds.