



March 27, 2022

Representative Tina Liebling, Chair
Representative Schomacker, Lead
Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Liebling and Lead Schomacker,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support for the Governor and Lt. Governor's investments in health equity for all Minnesotans. Together, we must address the structural inequities that persist across all dimensions of health.

For 39 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$32 million in community investments across the state, and advanced policy to create a state where women, girls, and their families thrive. With the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the Humphrey School, we produce the state's leading [research](#) on the well-being of women and girls every two years. That data tells us that women, girls, and gender expansive people have unequal access to health care and experience significant disparities in health outcomes in Minnesota. When we disaggregate the data, it is clear that communities disproportionately affected by health disparities include intersections of race, gender, place, and additional identities.

At WFMN, we use an intersectional equity lens to assess problems and we listen with intention to community members about their lived experiences and their ideas for solutions. In all of our work, we center and amplify the voices of communities who are most impacted by policy and, too often, least heard from in the policy arena.

Last year, women across the state shared with us that physical and mental health is fragile. The best outcomes are achieved when health care is provided with cultural competency and based in communities. We support the budget proposal to create a grant program for community-based healers in Section 45. Fully integrating community healers into our health care and insurance systems is also necessary if we are to create the equity in health care we seek. We are heartened by and support the bill's numerous provisions that place community and community-based organizations at the center of care solutions including community health workers grants, community solutions for healthy children, community driven strategies to

improve infant health outcomes, and the community advisory committee for law-enforcement-involved deadly force encounters.

Our data and listening also informs our support for building reproductive justice for people across Minnesota. An intersectional approach reveals how systems designed to serve some but not all, can create barriers. The Family Planning Special Project Program grants will increase access to reproductive health care to reduce the number of preterm and low birth rates, sexually transmitted infections, infertility, and detect cervical cancer and other health risks. These services represent a fraction of the spectrum of services needed to create true reproductive justice - to have autonomy over decisions about bearing children, to have access to vital prevention screenings, and receive culturally competent pre and post-natal care to ensure all parents and babies have a healthy start.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views as you consider this important bill. We urge you to invest in health equity to make Minnesota a place where women, girls, and gender-expansive people from all zip codes and backgrounds can thrive.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gloria Perez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gloria Perez

CEO/President

Women's Foundation of Minnesota