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Date: March 22, 2023

To: Members of the House K-12 Finance Committee

From: Joe Gothard, Superintendent

Re: HF1502

On behalf of the St. Paul Public School (SPPS) Board of Education, I am writing to voice our support for HF1502. I'm proud to report that the St. Paul School Board adopted a policy in December 2021 to require that Ethnic Studies become a basic course requirement for Saint Paul's high school diploma starting with the graduating class of 2025. Currently, all 10th graders are taking Ethnic Studies this academic school year. This was a culmination of work led by our student leaders, who engaged their fellow students and community at numerous meetings and forums, after reviewing the research and pedagogy to advocate for this policy change.

During our initial implementation, 93 percent of students who participated recommended the course. The high school requirement is an interdisciplinary course that examines students' identity, heritage, culture, and communities in relation to various power structures, forms of oppression and inequalities that have an impact on their lives. With an emphasis on stories and lived experiences of people of color in the United States, the course explores the collective struggles, resilience, and triumphs of their communities.

We have established an Ethnic Studies Advisory & Community Collaborative Group, which meets regularly to collaborate on the Ethnic Studies course curriculum and programmatic activities. This is a direct partnership with SPPS so that the course will be reflective of the needs and wants of the community we serve. The district has also identified the following long-term goals for Ethnic Studies:

- Continue to support student recruitment and enrollment district wide through data-driven results
- Increase programing staffing at relevant school sites and district level
- Collaborate with other districts programs to disrupt systems of inequity and institutional racism to support student learning and development, and provide all students with support and opportunity to succeed
- Continue partnerships with outside research organization for thorough program and course evaluation
- Establish partnerships with colleges/universities on College in the Schools (CIS)/Concurrent Enrollment for Critical Ethnic Studies (CES) Course
- Continue to development and offer new elective courses for Ethnic Studies Department
- Embedded Ethnic Studies Teaching and Pedagogy across at all SPPS grade levels and content area.
- Expand CES course offerings to middle school sites
- Work towards an Educational Pathway to "Grow Our Own Educators" in Ethnic Studies with accredited colleges/universities.
- Continue to collect data in all aspects of the program to inform improvements and to support our district mission to inspire students to think critically, pursue their dreams and change the world.

As one of the few school districts to have an Ethnic Studies graduation course requirement, we couldn't have done this work without our young people. The success of our program could be a model for other school districts to replicate in the on-going struggle to ensure all Minnesota students can excel, have access to equitable opportunities and improve educational outcomes.

We are excited about advancing this work with our students, educators and community. Please consider supporting HF1502.