



April 12, 2021

Chair Rena Moran
House Ways and Means Committee

Chair Moran and Members,

The Council offers its strong support for HF 1342, the Workforce and Business Development omnibus. All Minnesotans are coping with economic uncertainty. At the same time, the economic and health crises of the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened racial disparities and the impacts of these disadvantages in our communities. African Heritage Minnesotans and other underserved communities, therefore, face unique challenges that require targeted legislation.

The funding and policy proposals in HF1342 seek to address the ways that structural economic problems are experienced by the African Heritage Community and other communities of color. The bill responds to challenges regarding unemployment, inadequate business finance, and lack of skills development.

Specifically, we want to highlight the following provisions in the bill:

- 1. \$50M Small Business COVID Support Grant Program**
- 2. \$10M Grant Program to Increase Access to Child Care**
- 3. \$10.6M Grant Program for Community-Based Business Development Services, including at least \$4M to fund and support women of color entrepreneurs**
- 4. Prioritization of BIPOC Communities in the Delivery of Workforce Development Services**
- 5. Microenterprise Development Program**
- 6. Removing Barriers to Employment Grant Program**
- 7. Innovative Employment Solutions Grant Program**
- 8. Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefit Insurance Program**
- 9. Unemployment Insurance Eligibility for Youth Workers, Senior Workers, and School Workers**

The above provisions are needed to better support people of African heritage and other communities of color in the face of the unique economic and social challenges they face. Thanks for your leadership in considering these issues. Please support HF 1342.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan
Executive Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage