

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: abdulwasa m. muhamed

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: minneapolis

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**Dear Chair Davnie,**

I am a 11th grader at South High School. My school experience, which included a wonderful teacher like one of my favorite teachers, Ms. Olague, was fantastic. It's like having a second or third mommy at school. Ms. Olague, I believe that every school should and deserves a colored instructor.

I joined in the Introduction to Urban Education course because I had always been intrigued about what college might be like in the future, and I also enrolled because I heard Ms. Olague was teaching it.

The reason I'm interested is that I'm curious about how colored students perceive school, and I'd like to be a part of those amazing colored teachers who helped me when school wasn't stressing me out, and I'd like to help students, especially colored students, enjoy school and create a safe learning environment for them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope you support this act,

abdulwasa m. muhamed

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

Abduwahid Mohamed

Student

Minneapolis

*Dear Chair Davnie*

I am a junior at south High School. I think I only had 2 teachers of color in my life and my experience with them was good. When you see a teacher who looks just like you, it is more comfortable and it makes students want to come to school. I think we should have more teachers of color in our schools. I enrolled in this class because I want to learn about different cultures. I am interested in becoming a teacher because I like to teach and I want students of color to see a teacher that looks just like them. Now I am learning about BLM in school. I am glad that I am in this class. Please support this act.

Abduwahid Mohamed

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Ajulu Otong

Affiliation (student):

City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Chairman Davnie,

My name is Ajulu and I am a senior at South High in Minneapolis. Going to school I never really experienced having a teacher of color, only about 4 teachers so far that were a person of color. During my elementary-middle school I only got to experience having a black teacher and that was only in first grade. When I was younger I didn't go to a public school, I went to a private school. Every teacher was a white female and one white male teacher. I personally felt I didn't get the right education that I wanted to get. It was the same history curriculum about a white person that everybody learned about. I wanted to learn more about people of colors, certain events, certain wars. I wanted to get into depth with powerful activists and so much more.

Once I reached high school I had all white teachers until my sophomore, junior, and senior year I had one teacher of color per year. When I had a teacher of color I personally felt a little more engaged in my class and started to talk more. The problem is not just the diversity with teachers but it's also within the classroom especially when you're taking challenging courses. I was enrolled into AP Statistics. I was the only African American woman in that class. Everybody was full white. If there is no diversity in higher level classes, what's the point of joining if you feel like you're not heard? So therefore I dropped it, it was a challenging class for me. If there were more teachers of color students could rely on their teachers and feel more comfortable throughout the class.

Once I joined Intro to Urban Ed. I personally didn't know about this class until my teacher encouraged me to take it. I wanted to challenge myself especially since this is a college course. But I really like how this class talks about racism and people of color. I felt this is the right education that I was missing throughout my years. I'm personally not interested in becoming a teacher but I would like to focus more on the criminal justice system and become a lawyer. But this class helps me learn how to get involved and learn more about society even more and get a better understanding.

Currently, we are in the unit of Black Lives Matter. As a class, we just finished watching the 13th a documentary film about how society is and was throughout the time. Although I've watched this film before I learned so much especially when it came to our prison system. Throughout the year I saw how our prisons instantly increase over time. There was a lot of data

and facts that I personally didn't know. One that I personally stuck on to me is how 1 in 3 black people is most likely to be in jail. That's insane. The film showed a lot of generation trauma that is still going on today. We need more people of color as teachers. Originally we had more black people as teachers before white people integrated schools. We need to bring that back, we need to bring BIPOC into our school for a better future for the teachers and for the students. We need to stop criminalizing and adultifying our black students. I wouldn't have learned this if it weren't for my Intro to Urban Ed class.

Ajulu Otong

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Angelica Torralba-Olague

Affiliation: Education Pathway Teacher & Coordinator

City of Residence: Apple Valley, MN

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Mr Chair Davnie and Members,

My name is Angelica Torralba-Olague and I'm the Education Pathway Teacher and Coordinator at South High School. This time last year I testified at the hearing of the Increase Teachers of Color Act in Chair Davnie's Education Finance Committee. I had a couple of students who were also interested in [sharing their story at the hearing](#). Their voices were heard and we were able to get our Education Pathway program up and running at our school. In Fall 2021, 47 students were interested in our program and registered to take the prerequisite class called Introduction to Urban Education. This is a dual enrollment high school & college credit class through Minneapolis College and South High School. 88% of the students are BIPOC in the course; 30% of which are American Indian students. In October 2021, we applied for the Grow Your Own grant. We knew that in addition to the coursework to prepare students to become future educators, we also need wrap-around services such as academic support and social emotional check-ins. Students coming back to in-person learning in the middle of the pandemic has been challenging for students' mental health and social emotional wellness. It is not enough to recruit students to take the college credit courses to become a teacher, but we also need to provide these supportive activities and check-ins to retain them as well. It is even more meaningful for our students to get that support from teachers who identify as Black, American Indian and other teachers of color, because they have faced the same Racial Battle Fatigue and other similar challenges as a person of color in a school system. The Grow Your Own grant has provided this opportunity to do just that.

In addition, as part of the Grow Your Own grant, we will offer four additional concurrent enrollment courses as part of the students receiving an Education Certificate (Introduction to Special Education, Multicultural Education, Technology for Educators and Introduction to Ethnic Studies) in the 2022-2023 school year. Students will have internship opportunities at Folwell and Anishinabe Academy schools where South High students will be implementing what they learned from the courses and work with elementary students for two days a week.

We are excited for this opportunity for our Future Educators to have this opportunity - and it was due to the Grow Your Own grant and advocacy from BIPOC students and teachers/staff. I hope more high schools throughout the city would have the opportunity to have an Education Pathway for their students. We are living at a time where many BIPOC students are wanting to unlearn and relearn the history of education and why inequities and opportunity gaps persist in the first place. Our Education Pathway program at South High does just this. It is a balance of in class work where we read scholarly articles, learn from guest speakers from the community, and have socratic seminars for students to share the wealth of their perspectives and how they experience the world. In the same time, students have practical experiences going into elementary schools like Folwell which is only four blocks away and Anishinabe Academy, one of the best practice site for American Indian students in Minneapolis, which has been important for the All Nation students in our Education Pathway program who formerly attended that school when they were in Elementary.

I thank you for supporting the Grow Your Own grants and Increase Teachers of Color Act in the past - and I hope it continues for more years to come.

Thank you,

Angelica Torralba-Olague

Education Pathway Teacher & Coordinator, South High School, Minneapolis

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Edna

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis

Dear Chair Davnie,

My name is Edna and I am a senior at South. My experience with teachers of color has had a positive impact on me. They created a space for me to feel belonged. Without teachers of color, I feel less comfortable and I don't feel understood. I enrolled in the Intro to Urban Education course because I am interested in the field of education and become an English or History teacher. I also wanted to learn more about what things I will face teaching in the future. The lack of diverse teachers in the schools I have attended has inspired me to become an educator. Students in diverse communities need to get educators that represent them. This will create a positive impact on their learning. As a future educator, it is my responsibility to be supportive and create a place where everyone can belong. The few teachers of color I had throughout my education made an impact on me that furthered my education. In this course, I am learning about how the system created affects people and other underrepresented groups the most. We have learned about stories of people who have survived or were mistreated by the system.

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

Hawi Emeru

Student

Minneapolis MN

Dear Chair DaVnie

I am a junior at South High School. My experience in school with teachers of color is refreshing. When a teacher is well educated about my culture or is of color it is easy to communicate because of the understanding of daily life experience. I enrolled in Urban education to learn more about the history of my people in this land. I grew up in Ethiopia protected from the truth of what happens in the U.S when you are a black person until I moved here when I was 10years old. I have seen racism and been built to it until my teachers spoke of it for a little while. Now I get to learn the full history of trauma and survivince of people of color and Native Americans. I haven't settled on a career. I want to pursue but I plan to use what I've learned to educate others. Right now I am learning about racism and the history of my peoples sufferings on this land and how it continues until this day in different forms and how it exists in schools. I hope more schools offer programs like the Education Pathway so we can prepare more future teachers.

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Hopa Stevens

Affiliation : Student

City of Residence: New Hope

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Dear Chair Davnie

In my 13 years of school I have been very lucky to have quite a few teachers of color, and more specifically indigenous teachers. I have almost always gone to schools where there was a certain program for the native students, whether that was a native american charter school or the program that i'm in today at South High, All Nations. This has had a very good impact on me, because the teacher can understand where I come from. They know my culture, my family, my history, and most importantly, my trauma. In these programs I never had to assimilate myself, and hold myself to these standards. My teachers and classmates always took me for where I was at, because we could all understand each other. Although I've spent most of my school years in these programs, there were also a few years where I wasn't in the programs, once in 3rd to 4th grade and for one semester in 7th grade. In these schools I did have to assimilate a bit. At a young age I didn't realize that was what I was doing. I wouldn't even think I was any different from my teachers and classmates, but once I was older it was completely different. I knew I was different from everyone else, and I knew I didn't belong. I don't think having non-POC teachers at the time had that much of a negative effect on me, they just couldn't understand me and help me the way I needed to be helped.

I enrolled in the Introduction to Urban Education course because it seemed very interesting to me and stood out. Ethnic studies has always been important and interesting to me, and although I don't plan on being a teacher, the school system is something that I think needs a lot of fixing if we want ALL of our students to succeed.

In this class we have learned a lot about indigenous studies, the school system, black lives matter at school, even race and identity. These are also one of the main reasons for joining this class. These things aren't talked about alot.

I hope this letter articulates the need for more teachers of color, and to have more programs like Education Pathway for students to learn more about the inequities that exist in the school system.

Hopa Stevens



# BUTTERFIELD-ODIN

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Regarding Bill Number: HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Steve Thomas, Superintendent, Butterfield-Odin School

Affiliation: School District Superintendent; Applicant for the Grow Your Own Grant

City of Residence: Butterfield, MN

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This is a letter in support of more funds to be provided for schools such as ours to be able to receive grant funding through the Grow Your Own Grant.

- Our small school of just over 200 students has well over 68% of our students who are Latinx.
- Many have just arrived recently from Guatemala and neighboring South and Central American countries.
- Many have a limited English speaking ability.
- Soon after I arrived at Butterfield-Odin, I was visiting one of our classrooms and asked a young man near me a question. He smiled, but looked puzzled. I asked again. I received the same response. A student near us said, "Mr. Thomas, he doesn't speak English. He does not know what you are saying." We are doing what we can to increase our EL staff, however, the best way is to encourage one or more of our students or one or more of our community members to become teachers.
- We applied for the GYO grant last year and did not receive funding due to lack of funding. We sincerely need the funding to begin this program of "Growing our Own" and are hopeful you can see your way to increase the available funds so that might happen this year.
- We have several high school students who are interested in becoming teachers at our school, but none have anything close to the financial resources to make that happen. The same is true of several community members/parents. This grant funding would be a life saver for these individuals, as to our school district.
- We are hopeful you will see the benefit of adding more dollars to this extremely important funding source to help our many students of color.

Thank you for your consideration!

Steve Thomas, Superintendent  
Butterfield-Odin School

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Mary Hendrickson

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis

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Dear Chair Davnie

My name is Mary and I am a senior at South High School. I have had very few teachers of color, but they all left a big impact on me. Being white and being taught by white teachers, you get a very narrow view of life. My teachers of color challenged me to think critically about race and my race, and have an insight that none of my white teachers have. This is important to me as a white person, but I can't imagine how impactful it would be for a student of color who sees so few teachers, if any, that look like them.

I took Intro to Urban Education because I wanted to learn more about antiracism in schools, and how to teach students of color as a white person. I won't have the unique insights teachers of color have, but as a future teacher I need to be informed about race, because I don't want to perpetuate a system that promotes inequities and puts students in color in danger and at a disadvantage to their white peers.

I am interested in becoming a teacher because education is such an important tool for future success. I specifically want to become an art teacher because art is a strong way to connect with your emotions and feelings, while also expressing your creativity and ideas. Art is a beautiful thing and I want to inspire future students to love it as well.

In this class we have learned about the history of education in the U.S.A, specifically about boarding schools. We have also learned about the different kinds of racism there is, how to solve issues in the school and now we are learning about Black history in this country and within education; specifically the school to prison pipeline and mass incarceration. This class has taught me to be a better critical thinker and to think about different perspectives within education and in all aspects of life. This course has helped me become a better friend to my friends of color, and will help me become a better teacher. This class will benefit many other students regardless of their race or if they live in an urban environment.



**NEW MILLENNIUM ACADEMY**  
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Date of Hearing & Bill Number: February 16, 2022 at 10:30 AM HF3079  
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee  
From: Kevin Xiong, Executive Director  
Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): New Millennium Academy  
City of Residence: Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

New Millennium Academy is a public charter school that serves the greater suburbs of north Minneapolis (Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, etc.). We regularly enroll 800 scholars every academic year where 99% of our families are Hmong, immigrants and/or refugees.

It has become a continuous struggle to find, employ and even sustain our BIPOC teachers. It is one of our utmost priorities that our teachers and staff members reflect our scholar and family population. Currently, only about 30% of our teacher population reflects our scholar and family's lived experiences, yet many of our educational assistants (about 90%) reflect our scholars and family's lived experiences. Our hope is to create a pathway for our educational assistants to become licensed teachers. We recently launched our Pathway to Classroom initiatives that provide our educational assistants with stipends to continue their education to become teachers.

We have continuously applied for the Minnesota Department of Education's Grow Your Own grant, yet due to the limited available funds, we did not receive the grant. We encourage the members of the Education Finance Committee to increase the available funds and to support HF3079 so that eventually, our educational assistants can become licensed teachers within the state of Minnesota.

We look forward to seeing this bill pass and to seeing the appropriated funds of HF3079 increase.

Sincerely,

Kevin Xiong, Executive Director

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Rani Nasim

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Minneapolis

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**Dear Chair Davnie,**

My name is Rani and I am a 12th grader at South High in Minneapolis. I have only had a few teachers of color throughout my school life, one of them sharing the same ethnicity as me. My teachers that were white had a hard time teaching about topics such as history and even talking about current events because they were too uncomfortable to talk about these topics. Throughout my school life, I've noticed that the white teachers constantly punished and suspended students of color more than they do to white students. These teachers did not even try to look at the inequities happening in schools, they didn't want to acknowledge how they themselves were causing the inequities inside the classroom and learning.

I enrolled in Intro to Urban Ed because I was aware of these disparities and inequities caused by the schools and white teachers. I saw how few teachers of color I actually had and how having no teachers of color in a school affects students of color. I didn't want to be ignorant of these issues currently built into our schools. I wanted to learn how to involve healing inside a classroom and how to strengthen identity in a classroom and society.

I want to become a teacher because I want to make a positive impact on students, their learning, and their time in school.

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: South High School

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization):

City of Residence: Minneapolis

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**Dear Chair Davnie**

I am a 12th grader at South High and I haven't seen a lot of teachers of color but I wish we had more teachers of color because they understand me more. I enrolled in the Introduction to Urban Education course because it helps me work with different people who have different color skin and cultures. Although I am not interested in becoming a teacher, I want to become a nurse and this class has helped me to learn how to work with different kinds of people that I will need to work with.

February 15, 2022

HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Ryan Fratzke

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Student

City of Residence: Farmington

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Dear Chair Davnie

Currently, I only have one teacher of color and she connects with my class pretty well. If she needs the class's attention we always listen, when she tells stories about minorities and people of color we pay attention because she does a great job of including a time in history or a certain lesson that's valuable to teaching. It's even better since this is a class dedicated to urban education.

I picked the Intro to Urban Education class to get more college credit, I also wanted to learn more about teaching and the history behind colored teaching/education. Being a teacher would be interesting because you tone your skills for a certain subject and it'll also develop better social and teaching skills.

We are learning about the incarceration history and how prisons and jails affected the view of future generations for minorities, specifically African American, and how this links to our education system. I hope more high schools have classes like this in the future.

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: **Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 10:30 AM**

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Tracy Stokes-Hernandez, Laura Maki, Maria-Renee Grigsby and Elizabeth Finsness

Affiliation: Minnesota State University, Mankato

City of Residence: Mankato

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With funding from the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color grant, the College of Education has provided direct financial support to students. By asking students what they need to be successful in their programs, we learned what that lack of financial aid and unexpected financial expenses outside of tuition (licensure and testing fees) hinder students' progress. The goal of the financial support is to relieve some of the financial burden of program completion and make connections with students of color to ensure their progress through their licensure program is not inhibited by institutional barriers. We were extremely grateful to receive a second round of CUGMEC funding in 2021, but disappointed by the huge decrease in funds from 2020 to 2021.

In 2020, we received \$140,000 in total funds with \$100,800 for scholarships to students of color and American Indian students. With those funds, we have awarded 44 scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$8,000 to help alleviate the financial burden of tuition. Grant funds were also used to hire MTLE test prep instructors to help students prepare for the licensure exams and to purchase MTLE test vouchers. To date, we have provided 59 students of color and American Indian students with at least one MTLE test voucher. Funds were also used to purchase textbooks for students unable to financially meet this essential need.

Between fall 2020 and spring 2022, 77 students of color and American Indian students (from among 88 applicants) received scholarships or test vouchers from the CUGMEC grant. We know this funding has impacted student retention and persistence. Since 2017 (the first year Mankato received CUGMEC funds), the number of students of color and American Indian students completing teacher preparation programs has grown from an average of 19 (2017-2018) to 33 (2019-2021) per year. Even with over \$100,000 to award in scholarships, we could not meet the needs of all students of color and American Indian students in our teacher preparation programs.

In contrast to the 2020 CUGMEC award, Mankato's 2021 award totaled \$55,000 with \$45,000 to scholarships for students of color and American Indian students and the remainder to purchase MTLE test vouchers. Due to the drastic decrease in funding, we did not budget for MTLE test prep sessions. Additionally, due to the decrease in funding, the number of students of color and American Indian students we can support has drastically decreased compared to the previous funding cycle.

It is imperative that the CUGMEC funding be increased if we truly want to increase the number of students of color and American Indian students who enter the teaching workforce. Students of color and American Indian students need financial resources to support their retention and persistence to program completion and full licensure. Without the CUGMEC funding, teacher preparation programs are limited in the financial support necessary for student success. It is because of the expressed needs of each of our students, that we ask for an increase in funding to help more students complete teacher preparation programs.

On behalf of the College of Education students:

Tracy Stokes-Hernandez, Laura Maki, and Elizabeth Finsness

Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant Co-Investigators

Minnesota State University, Mankato

*Please record your written testimony here and return this to [sarah.burt@hosue.mn](mailto:sarah.burt@hosue.mn) as an OCR compliant .pdf  
(optical character recognition)*

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: HF3079

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Dr. LeAnne Johnson on behalf of Special Education Programs at the University of Minnesota

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Coordinator of a State Approved Teacher Preparation Program (University of Minnesota - Twin Cities)

City of Residence: Golden Valley/Minneapolis

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This testimony is provided on behalf of Special Education Programs at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in advocacy for increasing the state appropriation for Minnesota's Grow Your Own Grant program.

From the 2021 Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand Report prepared by Minnesota's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, there were three findings that are particularly notable in supporting increased funding for the Grow Your Own teacher preparation grant program:

1. The highest unmet demand is for professionally licensed special education teachers (e.g., Academic and Behavioral Strategist, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emotional Behavioral Disorders, etc.) - a demand that is pervasive across the state and has persisted for decades despite previous investments.
2. For the 2018-2019 academic year, of the 3,261 candidates from all areas of teacher licensure that completed a Minnesota licensure program, 85% identified as white - an issue that has also persisted for decades.
3. The vast majority of districts (70%) report being significantly to very significantly impacted by teacher shortages; with 84% believing there are somewhat to significantly fewer teachers than five years ago.

Other investments, such as MN Teacher Candidate Grants, Federal TEACH Grants, and Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educator Grants, are contributing to efforts to increase Minnesota's teacher supply, but they are insufficient. These programs are helpful to individuals who have already found a pathway to licensure within a teacher preparation program, but these are isolated investments. The Grow Your Own Grants Program creates an opportunity for systemic innovation and new pathways to licensure for individuals who may not otherwise see it as feasible or attainable. For stories of how the University of Minnesota has historically partnered with school districts to create new pathways for diverse groups of new teachers (supported in part by a Grow Your Own funding), see the "Multiple Pathways to Teaching" story published by the University of Minnesota's CEHD Connect (<http://connect.cehd.umn.edu/pathways-to-teaching/>).

### **Empowering School Systems to Elevate Local Assets**

School systems throughout our state have localized assets that they should be empowered to leverage as they design pathways to teacher licensure that meet their localized needs. Though we strongly advocate for partnerships between school systems and institutions of higher education (IHEs) when preparing future teachers, our own partnerships have taught us the value in school systems having the flexibility to design tailored solutions. For example, Grow Your Own grant funds may be used by a single school system to pay tuition costs for a paraprofessional to obtain a teaching license for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at one IHE while also supporting several other school staff to participate in intensive mentoring and preparation to obtain a license for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders from another IHE. Further, school systems can use Grow Your Own funds to identify individuals within their own communities (e.g., high school students, school support staff, cultural or faith leaders, etc.) who may receive mentoring, local professional learning experiences, and financial support to obtain a teaching license as they stay and continue their service to their community, thereby addressing a substantial issue associated with teacher retention in rural areas. Simply, Grow Your Own grants fund flexible solutions to meet local needs through supportive IHE partnerships.

### **Prioritizing Access to High Quality Teacher Preparation**

School systems in rural communities face some of the greatest challenges when trying to increase and diversify their teacher workforce. Traveling to an IHE campus, access to regular mentoring by experienced teachers in the field of licensure being sought, and high quality professional preparation based on research supported practices are all barriers that are exacerbated in rural areas of our state. Increased funding to Grow Your Own grants will allow school systems to have the resources needed to address barriers that hinder opportunities within their local communities. For example, Grow Your Own funds may be used to provide the technology needed for individuals to participate in remote learning offered by an IHE and/or collaborate with other school systems in other areas of the state. Funds may also support needed travel to participate in intensive professional development in different areas of the state and/or for mentors from neighboring communities to join licensure candidates in their own communities to offer coaching support. With high quality teacher preparation programs available throughout the state, increasing funds for school systems to take action that prioritizes access to those programs is necessary to addressing the systemic barriers that hinder growth of our teacher workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony advocating for increased appropriations for Minnesota's Grow Your Own teacher preparation grants program.