

Minnesota House of Representatives

Testimony of Helen J.M. Bassett

Presented to:

House Education Policy Committee

February 1, 2021

Committee Chair Rep. Ruth Richardson (52B)

Vice Chair Rep. Hodan Hassan (62A)

Helen J.M. Bassett, BPA, is a 19-year member of the Robbinsdale Area Schools, current board vice chair, Treasurer of the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth Joint Powers Board; Appointed 2021 Board member, Association of Metropolitan School Boards (AMSD); Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA) 2018 All-State School Board Member; Recipient of the MSBA's President's Award for 2020-2021; Former Chair and 12-year board member of the West Metro Education Integration Program (WMEP) integration school district); former 4-year appointed board member of Intermediate School District 281; Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Minnesota School Board Directors of Color & Indigenous Fellowship (MNSBDOC); and, Principal, Education Partnership Institute – MN (EPI-MN)

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Madame's Chair, Vice Chair and Members

My comments today reference sections in certain recommendations in the “The House Select Committee on Racial Justice” (SCRJ) final Report.

The SCRJ Final Report and the recommendations are *“designed to address intentional and unintentional systemic disparities and inequities based on race.”*

Within that context I considered specific sections in the [HF 217](#) proposal. 1) I speak in support for increased diversity in the ranks of Minnesota Teachers, 2) create pathways to create and maintain opportunities that support the development of shared cultural understanding among teachers, students and leaders setting policy.

I draw upon one of the local Robbinsdale school district legislative platform advocacy issues:

Enhance Educator Workforce

- ***Support policies that increase diversity in the educator workforce*** to reflect diverse student populations. Maintain the tiered licensing system to ensure multiple pathways for licensure.

Robbinsdale is a member of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD) this committee is likely familiar with AMSD and perhaps also its Reimagine Minnesota initiative which I will next draw from

SYSTEM FUNDING and LEADERSHIP **Reimagine Minnesota 42 Metro District members Feb, 2019 work**

Strategy H: *Create and sustain* consistent shared understanding of equity and high level of skill application for leaders at all levels

Related directions recommended in inter-district work sessions:

- Continue and intensify equity-related training for all school stakeholders
- Unify accountable system-wide planning and action in school, districts, across districts, statewide
- Educate to assure equity-aware decision-making by school boards and/or leaders
- Build school boards representative of the community with equity decision-making lenses & practices
- Implement proactive district/inter-district strategies and metrics that disrupt racial bias in the education system
- Seek school board leaders that support education equity goals

Examples of Action Steps Desired Outcomes In Phase I In Phase II

A. *Develop* an equity definition by engaging all education associations and stakeholders

B. *Provide* school boards opportunities to build and grow their equity knowledge/beliefs

C. *Build* local PD and T&L plans aligned with the statewide equity definition

D. *Identify* and promote MN district-approved teacher and principal preparation programs

E. *Tie* tenure/Q-comp to cultural competencies

- ❖ Statewide definition of equity endorsed by these associations and stakeholders
- ❖ Personal mind shifts/changed practices
- ❖ Cultural competency embedded in teachers' PD requirements
- ❖ Cultural competency embedded in teacher education and evaluation

Cite: Reimagine Minnesota Strategy H: <https://www.amsd.org/reimagine-h/>

Presentation: https://www.amsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Reimagine0204.gg_.pdf



Support the Increase Teachers of Color Act

The **2021 Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA)** is a bill that strengthens existing programs and proposes new efforts to attract, prepare, and retain more teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota. ITCA proposes systemic change and significant state investment to narrow opportunity gaps and create a state goal to increase the percent of teachers of color each year.

KEY PROVISIONS



Expand "Grow Your Own" program pathways for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and multi-racial, parents and non-licensed employees to become teachers



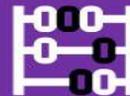
Increase the number of college scholarships and loan forgiveness opportunities for teachers



Require school districts to address institutional racism within their school policies, structures and practices



Provide all students with access to ethnic studies curriculum that is anti-racist and culturally relevant



Ensure that school learning and work environments validate, affirm and integrate cultural and community strengths for all students, families and employees



For more information, visit: www.tocaimn.com/legislation

As co-founder and Managing Director of the MN School Board Members of Color and Indigenous Fellowship, Note: I lend my personal support for the efforts of the work the aforementioned organizations with regard to Increasing diversity of teachers, administrators and school board members who set policy who have opportunity to increase awareness about the importance of cross cultural skill building

HISTORY | TIMELINE MINNESOTA SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS OF COLOR & INDIGENOUS FELLOWSHIP

Jan, 2016	May, 2016	Jan, 2017	Jan, 2018	Jan 2019	Jan 2020	Jan 2021
Start	1 st Social	1 st Official Mrg.	Legislative panel	Govt Partnership	Annual Mtg	Annual Mtg

MISSION

Fostering excellence in good governance, supporting effective leadership, and preparing school board members from diverse communities to champion high-quality public education for all students with a special focus on acknowledging the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of Minnesota students and families. **

GOALS**

- **To promote good governance and effective leadership in school board service**
- To encourage and support newly elected board members of color
- To serve as a resource to colleagues setting school board policy
- **To advance legislation that improves public education in Minnesota**
- **To inspire individuals from diverse communities to aspire to school board service**
- **To create pathways that strengthen educational equity and inclusion.**

MPR (2020) Diversity in Leadership: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/10/30/this-years-minn-school-board-races-are-competitive-and-more-racially-diverse>

MPR (2017) Diversity in Leadership: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2017/09/05/diversity-grows-in-minn-schools-but-not-school-boards>

