



Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
658 Cedar Street, Suite G57
St. Paul MN 55155

February 18, 2021

Chair Carlos Mariani
House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Mariani and Members,

I write to express the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage's support for H.F. 952, which would establish a task force to investigate the causes of violence against African American women and girls and to make recommendations about further steps needed to reduce and end such violence.

The predicament of violence against African American women in our society is as perplexing as it is tragic. Part of the problem is that data on the issue is inconsistent and incomplete. What we know is that African American women and girls are subjected to disproportionately higher levels of violence than other demographic groups. The National Crime Information Center data shows black people are overrepresented almost threefold in national cases of missing persons. Other research finds that African American cases go unresolved at four times the rate of white counterparts. Black women face double jeopardy because of gendered imbalances; some data suggest that media coverage of and public response to missing boys and men is greater in quality and scale than coverage of and response to the disappearance of girls and women. In addition, there's wide acknowledgment that cases of violence against African American women and girls are grossly underreported.

House File 952 would create an investigative instrument as a first step toward responding to the above perplexity of issues. The bill will bring public attention and resources to the pressing matter of the victimization of black women in our society. As a public, we need better understanding of the root causes of the vulnerabilities that African American women face and the cultures of indifference and impunity through which violence against them persists. We can gain this knowledge by amplifying the voices of black women about their experiences at the intersections of race, class, and gender. At the Council, we believe that such public visibility is critical for the empowerment of African American women, especially those at the socioeconomic margins. We urge you to support H.F. 952. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan
Executive Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage