



Rep. Ruth Richardson  
MN House of Representatives

January 10, 2023

Dear Rep. Richardson:

Thank you for your leadership in authoring HF55, a bill to establish an office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls (MMBWG) Office. We urge all members of the House to vote for this bill.

ISAIAH is a statewide organization comprised of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, 100 childcare centers, and dozens of barber shops in Minnesota. Altogether, these institutions represent over half a million Minnesotans. Our mission is to enable people to work together to organize and advocate for racial, social and economic justice.

ISAIAH leaders believe all people - Black or white, of Asian or Latinx heritage, indigenous, newcomer or long-time resident, in cities, suburb or rural – are inherently of value and deserving of dignity, inclusion, equity and redemption. Our faith traditions and sacred texts challenge us and our elected leaders to embrace a society in which all people are able to fully participate in creating and enjoying God's commonwealth; bringing redemption and healing to ourselves, our community, and our state.

Over the past couple of years, we have seen the beginnings of a remarkable reckoning with our nation's brutal history of enslavement, racial oppression and genocide.

Our nation was founded on the paradox of beautiful ideals of freedom, promulgated by men who profited from the rank dehumanization and exploitation of Black men, women and children stolen from their homes and forced into unspeakable misery. For 401 years, and more in the case of indigenous peoples of this continent, generations of trauma have been beaten into the very marrow of our society.

Until we fully grapple with the moral stain of this history, we will continue to replicate the trauma, whether wittingly or not.

Most faith traditions have an element of confession, as an essential step towards reconciliation, wholeness, and peace. It is time that we collectively confess as a state that racism is truly a crisis, one that we cannot deny or turn away from, but must turn our attention to solving through restorative policies, practices, procedures and investment.



The Minnesota Department of Health, in its groundbreaking [Advancing Health Equity](#) report to the legislature in February 2014, offers this definition: *“Structural racism is the normalization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal — that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color and American Indians. Structural racism is deeply embedded in American society and is a potent factor leading to inequities in all major indicators of success and wellness.”*

Sadly, hundreds of years of structural racism has negatively impacted the likelihood that black women and girls experience justice in the criminal justice system.

- There are an estimated 64,000-75,000 Black women and girls missing in the US
- Black girls are less likely than their peers to get Amber Alerts when they go missing because they are more likely to be classified as runaways which means less access to law enforcement resources and less media attention
- Cases involving Black women and girls stay open 4 times longer than other women
- In Minnesota, Black women are approximately 3 times more likely to die from homicide
- In 2021 – there was a 51% increase in homicide involving Black women the largest jump for any racial or gender group in that period
- During that time the numbers of unsolved cases of Black women rose 89% - largest demographic group

These troubling statistics validate the need for a MMBWG Office, which was recommended by the MMBWG Task Force in December 2022. This office would be focused on cold cases, obtaining grants to support community organizations, community outreach, research, and prevention efforts. Having this office is an important step towards acting in alignment with our moral call to repair past harms, to reach towards justice and wholeness for all, and to love and treat our neighbor as ourselves. We look forward to HF55 passing this year alongside with its companion bill SF19.

Sincerely,

Brian Fullman  
ISAIAH Lead Organizer

Vivian Ihekoronye  
ISAIAH Lead Organizer