



February 23, 2021

Representative Ruth Richardson
Education Policy Committee, Chair
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF 950 Ethnic Studies Provisions

Dear Chair Richardson and members of the Committee,

It is well-known that Minnesota has one of the largest educational opportunity gaps in the nation between students of color and white students.¹ This includes the differences in graduation rates, rigorous coursework enrollment, reading achievement levels, and more. As COVID-19 continues to persist in the state, the educational opportunity gap between students of color and white students only threatens to exponentially increase.

Given the circumstances of the rising educational opportunity gap, it is critical that the state take action to ensure that all students receive a holistic education that is relevant in its curriculum and pedagogy to close the opportunity gap. A growing body of research shows that ethnic studies enables students of color to see themselves, and in turn, become more likely to succeed in these areas of education; furthermore, ethnic studies will assist the development of all students, as each individual will learn about their cultural and historical backgrounds and their peers.²

The Minnesota Ethnic Studies Coalition—composed of over 30 community members and advocacy organizations—supports the following provisions in House File 950 that put Minnesota on the right path towards adopting ethnic studies:

- Ethnic Studies Curriculum (Lines 40.23-40.26): Grounding the work in common language and a definition is important to ensure that it is clear what is meant when we say “ethnic studies” and what to look for as schools consider implementing “ethnic studies curriculum” around the state.
- Culturally-Relevant Methodologies (Line 41.30): Requiring districts to incorporate “access to culturally relevant or ethnic studies curriculum” into their comprehensive, long-term strategic plans is a great start in ensuring that as districts plan long-term that they are incorporating a framework for adopting, implementing, and expanding ethnic studies.

¹ Nath, A. & Grunewald, R. (October 2019). “A Statewide Crisis: Minnesota’s Education Achievement Gaps.” Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

² Dee, T. & Penner, E. (January 2017). “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence From an Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” *American Educational Research Journal*, vol 54(1), pages 127-166.

- Long-Term Planning (Lines 55.16-55.18): We support the inclusion of ethnic studies as a component of what districts may include in long-term planning.

While we appreciate the initial steps that the Governor has taken on this issue, we urge the Education Policy Committee to go a step further and incorporate the ethnic studies provisions in [House File 704](#), which:

- Requires every school district to incorporate ethnic studies into their social studies curriculum;
- Requires the Commissioner of Education to adopt rules for statewide ethnic studies curriculum;
- Creates a 25-member ethnic studies task force composed of members of the community, students, teachers, and other diverse stakeholders, and more.

If Minnesota truly desires to close the educational opportunity gap and ensure the success of all their students, it is vital that the state implements a robust ethnic studies curriculum that reflects the diverse communities of all their students.

Sincerely,

Asian American Organizing Project
 Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL)
 Climate generation
 Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in MN
 Education for Liberation Minnesota
 Education Evolving
 Education Minnesota
 EdAllies
 League of Latinx Educators
 Minneapolis Federation of Teachers 59
 Minnesota Educators Against ICE
 Minnesota Zej Zog (MN Zej Zog / MZZ)
 St. Paul Promise Neighborhood
 Unidos MN
 Voices for Racial Justice
 Youth 4 Ethnic Studies
 YoUthROC
 Ana Munro, Faculty, North Hennepin Community College
 Rhonda Italiano, Faculty, North Hennepin Community College
 Deanna Forsman, Faculty, North Hennepin Community College
 Alejandra Headley, Public Health Specialist