



April 25, 2022

The Honorable Rena Moran
Ways & Means Committee
449 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Moran and Members of the Ways & Means Committee

I am writing to extend my strong support for House File 3920, the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Supplemental Budget Omnibus, because it makes critical investments in civil rights for Minnesotans. As the state's civil rights enforcement agency, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights' mission is to help ensure that Minnesotans can lead lives of dignity, free from discrimination. A critical component of achieving this mission is advancing budgetary proposals that will help reduce inequities and disparities across our state. As such, I deeply appreciate the inclusion of our shared civil rights budgetary priorities within House File 3920.

Specifically, I want to highlight the following components, which are also reflected in Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan's supplemental budget:

- **Increasing the Department's Investigative Capacity**
Minnesotans deserve a strong civil rights agency to turn to if they experience discrimination. This \$492,000 investment in fiscal year 2023, and \$922,000 in fiscal years 2024-25, allows MDHR to hire additional investigators to decrease caseloads for investigators so discrimination investigations can be done as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- **Improving the State's Ability to Track Bias and Hate Incidents**
The state needs better data collection in order to take actionable steps to address acts of bias or hate. This \$388,000 investment in fiscal year 2023, and \$486,000 in fiscal years 2024-25, allows MDHR to track, analyze, and report on bias and hate incidents, as well as collaborate with community-based groups who are doing their own data collection.
- **Funding the Bias Response & Community Equity Outreach Team**
Nonprofits, local governments, law enforcement, schools, and businesses all have a role to play in creating safe and welcome spaces for Minnesotans. This \$1,185,000 investment in fiscal year 2023 and \$2,002,000 in fiscal year 2024-25 would build a team fully equipped to create long-term partnerships across communities to help curb hate and discrimination from happening. This team would be equipped to immediately respond to hate incidents after they occur by providing culturally competent support to local communities. This will help build welcoming communities and

ensure Minnesotans who experience hate are heard and supported.

- **Strengthening the Department's Enforcement Capabilities in State Contracting**

Minnesota thrives when state investments are used to intentionally undo disparities and inequities. This is why MDHR works with more than 3,000 state contractors to ensure men and women are compensated equally for equal work and that contractors are making good faith efforts towards their workforce goals. MDHR has put forth two requests in this area. The first is an investment of \$228,000 in fiscal year 2023 and \$456,000 in fiscal years 2024-25 that will provide MDHR with needed resources to help support state contractors' equity and inclusion efforts. The second is a one-time investment of \$250,000 in fiscal year 2023 to provide funding for MDHR to consult with experts that will allow for better utilization of data and technology when evaluating state contractors' compliance.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter detailing our support of the civil rights components in the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Supplemental Budget Omnibus. Please feel free to contact me or, Eric Armacanqui the Department's Government Relations Director, with any questions. We look forward to continuing to work with the Minnesota House of Representatives on our shared civil rights priorities as we advance through the legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Lucero', with a small cross mark at the end of the signature.

Rebecca Lucero

Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Human Rights