



March 15, 2023

Dear members of the House Economic Development Committee,

My name is Mary Margaret Zindren. I am the Executive Vice President of the American Institute of Architects Minnesota and the Executive Director of AIA Minneapolis, AIA Northern Minnesota, and AIA St. Paul. On behalf of our more than 2,300 architects and design professionals, I am writing in support of House File 1289, which creates the Emerging Developer Revolving Loan Fund.

We are strong proponents of policies that promote ownership among people who have historically faced discrimination in lending and financing, and this includes supporting the development community. Creating funding and support mechanisms like those in House File 1289 can help move us toward a more inclusive development community, one that more accurately reflects the populations of our cities and towns.

We also want to encourage support of emerging local developers because we believe they are deeply invested in their communities, and that more empowered local developers will reduce the opportunity for national or conglomerate developers to continue to gain market share. When local developers build their own communities, their solutions and visions are often much more reflective of the needs of the community and the people who live in it than a remote company's solutions could ever be.

In the wake of the unrest following the murder of George Floyd, we have seen local developers and design professionals partner with communities of impacted stakeholders to create new and more equitable visions for the neighborhoods they call home. They are identifying new ways to create those visions and incorporating the voices and perspectives of members of their communities that are often overlooked by more traditional development practices. By creating new supports for emerging developers and developers of color, we can help make those innovative, inclusive visions become reality.

In addition to this bill supporting developers, we hope to see additional programs and support for creating jobs and wealth within communities. It takes an entire team of professionals to complete a project - developers, financiers, designers, tradespeople, contractors - and we need to help communities of color build capacity in all of these areas.

If we wish to continue to create a strong base of developers in our community for today and for the future, it is time to acknowledge that there are significant barriers for developers of color and find ways to eliminate those barriers and advance equitable development. We at AIA Minnesota believe that this bill is a significant step in that direction, and hope you will join us in supporting it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Margaret Zindren".

Mary Margaret Zindren, CAE
Executive Vice President, AIA Minnesota
Executive Director, AIA Minneapolis, AIA Northern Minnesota, AIA St. Paul

cc: Representative Hodan Hassan