

February 24, 2021

Honorable Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs has an important role as a state agency to advise and inform elected officials about our constituent communities and their needs. Over the past several years, our agency has placed significant focus on addressing the chronic and persistent achievement and opportunity gaps that impact our community throughout the state. Based on our work, I write today in support of the policy provisions in H.F. 950 that serve as critical and transformative policy to begin to truly better serve all Minnesota students.

First, while the percentage of students of color and American Indian students in the state has steadily increased over the past decade, the percentage of teachers of color and American Indian teachers has remained stagnant. Therefore, we strongly urge you to support the policy language pertaining to TOCAIT in H.F. 950. This specific piece of legislation has been informed by feedback from hundreds of members and educators from communities of color and American Indian communities. Additionally, this provision has also been vetted and endorsed by more than two dozen important organizations. A school environment that validates, affirms, embraces, and integrates cultural and community strengths of all students, families, and employees is imperative to TOCAIT retention efforts. This environment is also important to improve legitimate engagement of all students and their parents. An additional significant provision of this legislation would establish a state goal to increase the percentage of TOCAIT each year and have a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of K12 students by 2040.

Additionally, in order for educators to develop relationships and foster learning environments that are key to learning, supporting the emphasis on mental health supports and embedding social and emotional needs of students in article 3 of H.F. 950 would be critical to this effort. Given the mental health impacts of the pandemic across communities, there is even more of a heightened urgency to pass such legislation.

Ultimately, in order for our state to improve how we serve our students of color, including our Latinx students, we need to better understand their needs and make intentionally systemic policy changes, such as those included in H.F. 950.

Thank you for your leadership in supporting provisions that vitally important to addressing the needs of all of our students.

Sincerely,



Rosa Tock | Executive Director