

Testimony for SF 1682 Legacy Budget Omnibus Bill

Pamela Standing, Co-Executive Director of the Minnesota Indigenous Business Alliance (MNIBA)
and
Graci Horne, Interim Director of the Minnesota Native Artists Alliance (MNA)

Dear Chair Senator Hawj and members of the Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee. I write this testimony in reference to funding in the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Budget allocations.

Over the last two years MNIBA has been actively engaged with the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to secure data research on all Cultural Heritage Fund allocations/grants distributed between 2010 – 2022. Since that time five state agencies (Department of Administration, Historical Society, Humanities Center, Indian Affairs Council, and the State Arts Grant Board.) have received funding collectively in the amount of \$705 million. Less than 2% of that money was distributed to the First Inhabitants of the State of Minnesota.

Of the five agencies that are awarded grants, the Indian Affairs Council has received the least amount of funding and has seen a decrease in grant money over the last 5 years. A similar pattern can be seen when examining the data for the state's other communities of color: looking at the Historical Society, for example, shows that an average of 3.2% of funding between 2010 and 2022 was allocated to Black, Asian, or Latinx groups/individuals.

FACTS:

- ❖ Since 2010, over \$4 billion has been granted through the Legacy Amendment, with over \$705 million granted in the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund.
- ❖ The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund receives 19.75% of the sales tax revenue from the Legacy amendment to support arts, arts education and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage.
- ❖ Based on current sales tax revenue, Minnesotans will invest more than \$1.2 billion in arts and cultural heritage fund projects and programs over the 25-year life of the tax.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE: Whose Culture is the Legacy Amendment Preserving?

- ❖ While the stated purpose of the fund is to “preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage,” an analysis of the program’s grant disbursement data makes it clear that funding allocation decisions are a reflection and continuation of the state’s settler colonial history.
- ❖ The failure to recognize the rich history and cultures of the original Native people in Minnesota are evident in the data; of the \$178 million granted since 2017, only 2% of funds have been awarded to Native projects. (Due to the poor reporting and inconsistent data, we challenge that percentage is even less.)

The Legacy Amendment is currently framed in the context of Minnesota's settler colonial history and needs to be re-framed to acknowledge the rich history and culture of the original Native people of the state. Structural participation of Native people and other communities of color would meaningfully impact change and contribute to greater accountability and transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

"Nothing about us without us" (Latin: *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis*) is a slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy. In its modern form, this often involves national, cultural, ethnic, disability-based, or other groups that are often intentionally marginalized from political, social, and economic opportunities.

While the structure of each granting agency is different, they all present barriers to Native people and communities of color in Minnesota. These include poor record keeping and a lack of data standardization, high barriers for eligibility that make it difficult to obtain grant funding, and large grants only being allocated to large and established organizations, therefore we recommend the following:

- ❖ We would request the Legacy Committee pursue policy changes immediately along with paying restitution and reparations in the budget that realign its original mission to action by increasing the budget over the next ten years to make this practice right and show true restoration.
- ❖ Policy change in language would include non-native organizations applying on behalf of Native people, must show collaboration and partnership agreement with a Native-led organization(s) to ensure transparency and accountability.
- ❖ Policy changes in language to ensure accountability and alignment with Public law 101-644, where people claiming Native status must provide proof of enrollment as a citizen of a Native Nation.
- ❖ Enforce a transparent process that ensures monies set aside for Native people, is actually ending up in Native hands.
- ❖ Include education about the harms of cultural appropriation deeply embedded in settler colonial history.
- ❖ There is a need to standardize data and reporting across all agencies, included would be to capture data on the culture or ethnicity of awardees so that reporting on grant allocations is more accessible and increases transparency and accountability of the five funding agencies.
- ❖ There is a need to increase the structural participation of Native people through leadership opportunities, decision making power, and distinct program offerings separate from language revitalization.
- ❖ The Minnesota Native Artists Alliance (MNAA) would like to be at the table and recommend artist voices and representation from throughout the state and the 11 Native communities to help shape new Legacy policy moving forward.
- ❖ The Minnesota Native Artists Alliance (MNAA) recommend and help train Native artist grant reviewers from throughout the state and from the 11 Native communities.

WE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS SET FORTH IN THE MINNESOTA NONPROFIT COUNCIL'S "EQUITY IN MINNESOTA'S GRANT MAKING" REPORT AS FOLLOWS:

- ❖ Simplify and shorten grant applications. Use accessible language and writing style.
- ❖ Invest in a centralized electronic grants management system to increase capacity and simplify the application process for potential grantees.
- ❖ Change reporting requirements to be more equitable and less Eurocentric. Many nonprofit

organizations appreciate the shift some foundations are making away from seeing individuals served as data points and instead having conversations around lessons learned from projects and/or programs.

- ✦ Set aside a proportion of each funding opportunity to specifically grant to Native and communities of color-led and - serving organizations and/or organizations with a small to midsize operating budget. (adapted)
- ✦ Directly engage the communities being served when determining programming opportunities and involve communities in decision making processes. Be proactive in recruiting diverse applicants, use statewide organizations serving Native and communities of color. (Adapted)
- ✦ Increase funding available for development and provide funding for operating costs.

Respectfully submitted:

Pamela Standing
pamela@mniba.org
651-515-0373

Graci Horne
graci@mninativeartists.org
505-463-9732