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February 3, 2023

Chair Erin Murphy
State and Local Government and Veterans Committee
3211 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Murphy and committee members,

I am writing on behalf of the Awood Center, a dynamic worker-led organization whose mission is to provide education and leadership development among workers in the East African community of Minnesota. I want to share that Awood strongly supports the proposed FY24-25 budget for the Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

Since 2017 Awood has been working with East African workers at Amazon who have seen firsthand the impacts corporate monopolies have on workers. In recent weeks workers have helped to advance legislation that would provide much needed protections for Amazon workers, who suffer a higher rate of injury than workers in any other sector in Minnesota. In retaliation for these efforts, Amazon recently announced it would be closing its sorting facility in Shakopee and laying off nearly 700 workers.

Given Amazon's dominance of warehousing, these laid off workers will be left with few options for employment outside of Amazon. No company should have this kind of power over workers. This is why Awood is urging legislators to support the Attorney General's proposed budget, which will provide additional resources for curbing the power of giant monopolistic corporations like Amazon.

The proposed budget for the Attorney General includes two key antitrust components. The first is funding to hire two additional attorneys in the antitrust division which would nearly double the size of the division from 2.5 FTEs to 4.5 FTEs. This modest request is an important first step in providing the resources necessary to enforce our antitrust laws and protect workers from powerful firms that undermine competition.

The second item is one-time funding that will be used to stand up a revolving litigation expense account. This fund would be used to engage in complex multistate litigation, including antitrust cases. Amazon is a global behemoth that stretches across state and international lines, which means multistate litigation will be an important tool in rooting out anticompetitive conduct. This fund along with statutory changes that will allow the office to reinvest damages it receives from these cases, will give the Attorney General a powerful new tool for addressing poor corporate behavior.



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Thank you, Chair Murphy and committee members for the opportunity to share the Awood Center's thoughts. We look forward to working with all of you to secure this additional funding for the Minnesota Attorney General. If you have any questions, you can contact me, Abdi Muse at abdi@awoodcenter.org.

Sincerely,

Abdirahman Muse (e-signed on 2/3/2023)

Abdirahman Muse
Executive Director
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