



March 5, 2023

Chair Bobby Joe Champion
Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee
Re: Office of New Americans HF330/SF360

Chair Champion and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage writes in support of HF330 (Feist) and SF360 (Mohamed), which would create an Office of New Americans and establish an Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.

Our Council's constituents include Minnesota residents who were born in the United States and those who immigrated from Africa, the Caribbean, and other regions of the world. To serve these communities, we partner with state and local enterprises that focus on the unique challenges facing immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. We work with the Assistant Commissioner of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs at DEED, and our constituents benefit from the educational and liaison services of that office. Our council members are engaged in public conversations about local immigrant and refugee support services, and they are actively involved in initiatives (e.g., Gateways for Growth Challenge) to improve opportunities for immigrant inclusion within the Minnesota economy.

In light of the preceding, we welcome the creation of the Office of New Americans and its Interdepartmental Coordinating Council as prospective partners in the work to build stronger structures of immigrant and refugee inclusion, opportunity, and support in Minnesota. In the same spirit, we recommend that you take up the language of the DE2 Amendment of the House version of this bill. The DE2 Amendment clarifies the duties of the Office of New Americans, requires that the Office collaborate and consult with state ethnic councils, and identifies the state ethnic councils as members of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. We were consulted in the development of the DE2 Amendment, and we join the other ethnic councils in recommending that you support that amendment. Thanks for your leadership on issues of immigrant rights and socioeconomic inclusion in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | CMAH Executive Director
Theodore Rose | CMAH Policy Director

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and*
- Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*