

March 3, 2023

Dear Chair Champion and members of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee:

The Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs (MCLA) is tasked to advise and inform on legislation and policy that pertains to Latino Minnesotans statewide and serve as a liaison between government and Latino communities. Within this statutory role, we want to comment on S.F.360 (Sen. Mohamed) regarding the creation of the Office of New Americans (ONA), a new division within the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Since its ideation, MCLA has supported the establishment of this office as we believe it will serve as a key support for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Their full integration is vital in accessing jobs, career training, developing entrepreneurial ventures, and navigating the supporting services needed as they call Minnesota home.

With these considerations in mind, we offer the following suggestions for bill S.F. 360. The Council is concerned that as introduced, the bill duplicates functions already performed by the state's ethnic councils without including them as an advisory entity. Inclusion of the ethnic councils will be beneficial to the populations we are trying to serve. As a Council, we continue supporting immigrants with our current legislative work the in areas of economic and workforce development, prosperity, and financial stability.

Along with the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (CAPM)'s recommendations, the Latino Council also suggests that the language of S.F. 360 be updated to reflect that of the DE2 Amendment of its House companion, H.F. 330. As indicated by the CAPM, this updated language would clarify the duties of the ONA in the context of workforce access and workforce readiness; require the ONA to collaborate with, consult, and solicit input from the ethnic councils; and add the ethnic councils to the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs proposed in Subdivision 4. What these amendments seek is that the ONA not duplicate work already being done by the councils. Duplicative work creates confusion.

The Latino Council is very grateful for you and Senator Mohamed's tireless work on behalf of immigrants and refugees. We salute and appreciate the exemplary leadership you both provided during the successful passing of Driver's Licenses for All.

We respectfully ask that you consider these changes on S.F.360. I will welcome the opportunity to clarify any questions that you have. Thank you very much.



Rosa Tock, Executive Director