

January 20, 2023

Ron Latz, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave. W
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Confirmation of Rebecca Lucero as Commissioner of Human Rights

Dear Chair Latz and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I write in strong and unequivocal support of the confirmation of Rebecca Lucero as the Commissioner of Human Rights. I have had the honor to work closely with Commissioner Lucero as a subject matter expert in the Minnesota Human Rights Commissions' investigation of, and negotiations with, the Minneapolis Police Department. Commissioner Lucero has demonstrated every quality of an exceptional Commissioner of Human Rights.

Deep and abiding commitment to human and civil rights: Commissioner Lucero has a deep knowledge of the impact of discrimination and a passionate commitment to its elimination. Her entire career has prepared her for this role. From her work in Legal Aid, as an employment attorney in private practice, and a leader in the social services provider community, she has played an important role in fighting to make rights meaningful and to ensure the equality of opportunity.

Visionary leadership: Commissioner Lucero has a clear vision for the role of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights as an enforcement agency. She can see the promise contained Minnesota's forward leaning laws to protect human rights and create equitable opportunity for all while at the same time recognizing the limits of her authority and staying within the bounds of her role. Importantly, she is able to both clearly articulate this vision and to inspire her staff to embrace it. The agency, as a result, is able to meet its mission with greater effect and impact.

Effective and inspiring manager: In my work with the Human Rights Commission, I have had the opportunity engage with several members of its staff and to see to Commissioner Lucero in her management role. She has the capacity to bring out the best in her employees. This is true for those in junior positions to the most senior members of her team. Rather than focusing on weaknesses or areas of improvement, she identifies strengths and builds on them. She cares deeply about the well-being and success of every person who works for the Commission. While maintaining very high standards, Commissioner Lucero is able to achieve that difficult combination of both high productivity and high morale. This is a remarkable achievement at any time, but especially so for a manager during the Covid pandemic.

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Strategic consensus builder: Commissioner Lucero understands that the project of achieving civil and human rights is a shared one. The Department of Human Rights and its enforcement authority plays a critical role but it is but one part of a much larger mosaic. Commissioner Lucero has a unique capacity to reach out to, and connect with, a broad range of people representing a diversity of perspectives and engage in productive dialogue that drives collaboration and consensus. She is skilled at listening to find common ground and building on shared values and goals.

I have been a civil rights lawyer for nearly 40 years and worked with many enforcement agencies and their leaders. I also had the honor to work in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and led the Special Litigation Section in which I exercised enforcement authority. In all my work, Commissioner Lucero stands out as an exceptional, thoughtful, effective, committed, kind, and brave leader. She has and will continue to serve the State of Minnesota effectively as the confirmed Commissioner.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Jonathan M. Smith
Executive Director