

March 19, 2024

Chair FOUNG HAWJ  
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy—1150 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55103

Chair Hawj and members of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee:

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans is charged by the Legislature with the statutory duty of advocating on behalf of Minnesota's Asian and Pacific Islander communities, acting as the liaison between state government and these communities, and serving as an advisory body to the Legislature and the Governor. It is in this capacity that we comment on S.F. 5065.

The Council supports funds being made available directly to local communities to pursue programs that reflect the narratives of these communities' experiences during the Southeast Asian conflict, and in the years since they arrived as refugees in Minnesota. However, the Council is concerned about several aspects of Section 1 (a) of S.F. 5065—specifically, the competitive grants program. We believe this process would disadvantage communities less experienced with grant writing and, without more definition, could result in a less than equitable distribution of resources for the Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese communities.

Over the last year, our Council has also been working on a bill to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam War. Our legislative request, which we hope to introduce soon and have this committee consider, has been shaped by conversations with over 100 leaders from our Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese communities. Our Council's unique charge, skills, and relationships in the four Southeast Asian Minnesotan communities position us to guide and develop a framework to commemorate this anniversary in a manner that reflects Governor Walz's One Minnesota Vision. Our relationships will significantly uplift the ability of our Cambodian, Lao, and Vietnamese communities, who have less experience and capacity to design, implement, and host a once-in-a-lifetime commemoration program that reflects the significance of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam War.

With our proposal, the Minnesota Humanities Center and the Council will ensure that the to-date never-before-seen collaboration between these communities will lead to a successful commemoration program for Minnesota and the nation. This program would, in the words of President Biden's 2022 Proclamation on the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, "honor all those who bravely served in the Vietnam War and who sacrificed, as did their families and caregivers, on behalf of our nation."

We look forward to continuing to work with Senator Pha and the Committee on this important work to bring these two visions of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary together.

Sincerely,



Andrew Morris  
Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison  
Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans