

Niambi Jackson Testimony for SF4107

Good morning Madame Chair and Members, my name is Niambi Jackson and I'm an Elementary Education teacher candidate at the U of MN-Twin Cities.

My desire to teach in an elementary classroom has been a lifelong desire. The opportunity to give back and use all of my skills in order to teach a child, is the greatest gift and responsibility I can think of.

Were it not for the Collaborative Urban and Greater MN Educators of Color Grant and the other scholarships that I have received, I would not be able to pursue my goal of becoming a licensed teacher.

The CUGMEC grant and the other scholarships are allowing me to give back and make an incredible difference. What a difference the scholarships have made in my life - I am able to sleep better, get better grades, have less debt, and *much* less stress and continue to be able to work full time. Research shows Black students who have *one* Black teacher by third grade are 7% more likely to graduate high school and 13% more likely to enroll in college. As an African American woman, who works in a school, I see first hand the devastation that occurs because of the lack of Black teachers. I also see the incredible impact I have made on all children. Parents of ALL children continue to tell me how important I have been in their child's life and that they stayed at the school because I was there as someone who looked like them and could understand the world through their eyes. For example, a *Kindergarten* child cried almost every day about going to school with no teachers that looked like her. Another mother painfully described her once happy healthy 5th grade son who anguished over not having a teacher that looked like him - he started to *hate* school, lose confidence, completely withdraw, and have nightmares and crying fits. A Somali mother that cried when she heard me calling her daughter beautiful, something that in the 3rd grade her daughter already doubted, but bc she heard *me* say it often enough, someone who looked like her, she started to believe it.

I have more than 1 year left in my program and I would love to apply for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship; I could really use that kind of financial assistance in order to make my dream come true and there are thousands of teacher candidates like me. I have so much student loan debt and without this scholarship, I fear that I would add to my debt and struggle paying my loans with a limited teacher salary - I cannot afford to go backward financially in order to make a much needed difference in children's lives. I need help.

I have also been struggling and stressed trying to figure out what scholarships are available for tuition and cost of living during student teaching.

Please support the funding requests in this bill for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Program and for the Collaborative Urban and Greater MN Educators of Color Grant Program. Thank you.

