

OFFICE OF THE **PRESIDENT**

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February 13, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Minnesota State University Moorhead, I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the bill relating to arts and cultural heritage, specifically the appropriation of funds to establish a Cultural Mall in the city of Moorhead, Minn.

According to the Minnesota Demographer, Clay County and Moorhead are the fastest-growing regions outside of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. This rapid growth, driven in large part by the increasing diversity of our population, brings with it a pressing need for spaces that support cultural exchange, economic opportunity, and community integration.

At present, Moorhead lacks sufficient spaces where cultural groups can gather for meetings, celebrations, and artistic expression. There are very few community centers that can accommodate ethnic and cultural celebrations, provide venues for local artists, or allow for cross-cultural dialogue. The proposed Cultural Mall would address this gap by:

- Providing a marketplace for small and minority-owned businesses, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs and stimulating the local economy.
- Offering access to ethnic groceries, restaurants, and goods, meeting the diverse needs of Moorhead's residents and enhancing our city's cultural fabric.
- Creating a community hub for cultural events, performances, and educational programs, which will foster inclusivity, understanding, and engagement among people from all backgrounds.
- Providing space for local artists and community groups to gather, collaborate, and celebrate their cultural heritage, amplifying diverse voices and strengthening the community's shared identity.
- Stimulating economic growth and tourism, benefiting both local businesses and the city as a whole.

This appropriation will not only support arts and cultural heritage but will also contribute to the long-term economic and social vitality of Moorhead. The Cultural Mall will be a testament to our community's commitment to inclusivity and our shared future.

I urge you to support this critical investment in Moorhead's cultural and economic future by approving the necessary funding for the Cultural Mall. This project represents an opportunity to build a lasting, positive impact for our diverse community and the generations to come.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. I welcome any questions or further discussions on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Timothy M. Downs'.

Dr. Tim Downs, President