

Dear Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the 2025 Increase Teachers of Color Act (SF3128), a critical piece of legislation that directly addresses Minnesota's longstanding and urgent need to diversify its educator workforce. I recognize the unique and transformative potential of this bill—particularly for Latine educators and the students they serve.

Minnesota's schools are increasingly diverse, with Latine students now representing over 10% of the state's K-12 public school enrollment. Yet, according to the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), Latine teachers make up less than 1% of the teacher workforce. This underrepresentation has far-reaching consequences. Research consistently shows that students of color—especially those from Latine, Black, and Indigenous backgrounds—experience higher academic engagement, increased graduation rates, and improved socioemotional outcomes when taught by educators who share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

SF3128 takes concrete and thoughtful steps toward reversing this disparity. By expanding and codifying the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship program with a \$10M annual investment, the bill would support at least 1,000 underrepresented teacher candidates—many of whom are Latine—on their path to becoming licensed educators. This is not a theoretical investment. These scholarships will make it possible for aspiring teachers from working-class Latine families, many of whom are first-generation college students, to persist through financial hardship and reach the student teaching phase—a known point of attrition in teacher preparation.

Equally vital is the \$3M annual investment in Closing Educational Opportunity Gaps Grants. These funds will allow schools to implement culturally responsive practices, mentorship programs, and structural reforms that improve retention of Latine educators. These supports are essential, as retention remains a critical issue: according to recent studies, teachers of color in Minnesota are more likely to leave the profession due to isolation, lack of support, and systemic bias.

Moreover, the Act's amendments to the Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color (CUGMEC) Grant program—extending grant periods to four years and setting predictable award caps—will provide greater stability to institutions preparing the next generation of Latine teachers. This change will help teacher preparation programs in both urban and rural communities develop long-term, while remain culturally grounded strategies to support Latine educator candidates.

In sum, SF3128 offers a strategic, evidence-based approach to addressing one of Minnesota's most pressing educational equity issues. It acknowledges the assets, leadership, and resilience of Latine communities and affirms the fundamental truth that all students deserve to see themselves reflected in those who teach and guide them.

I urge lawmakers to pass this bill without delay. Our future depends on a thriving, diverse, and representative teaching force—and SF3128 brings us one step closer to that vision.

Sincerely,  
Irma Márquez Trapero

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irma', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end.

Chief Executive Officer  
LatinoLEAD