

April 1, 2025

Senate Education Finance Committee and MN Elected Officials,

My name is Xue Xiong and I am an educator in the state of Minnesota. I have taught as a Multilingual Language (ML) teacher for nine years before transitioning out of the classroom and supporting teachers, administrators, and other educators at the district and state levels.

I am writing today to express my support for Senate File 3128. Minnesota is incredibly diverse yet data continues to show that our student body is diversifying while our teacher/educator workforce remains the same. We only have about 5% of teachers of color in the whole state of Minnesota. In a world where representation helps with validation, worthiness, a sense of empowerment, and feeling supported we need to expand the pathway to uplift marginalized communities to the classroom and our youth. It's not enough to be told that we matter, we must see, hear, feel, taste, and smell that we matter by directly seeing ourselves in the roles of teachers and educational leaders. This takes nothing away from the amazing work teachers are already doing with students, but representation does matter. Research shows us it does. Personal experiences show us it does.

I was born and raised in neighboring Wisconsin. The only Asian American and/or Hmong staff I ever saw in my schools were educational assistants (EAs) or support staff and even then, they were very few. My first Asian American teacher was in college during my freshmen year at the University of Minnesota. To this day, I have never had a Hmong teacher or professor, although I have had multiple Asian American professors. I had my first Asian American/Hmong principal in 2020 and watched my principal brave the waters of a worldwide pandemic, the rise of anti-Asian hate, and handle a staff that was frustrated by a fluctuating and unmapped form of education that our nation has never seen.

I was incredibly proud to be under the mentorship of such a strong, skilled, and steadfast principal. The little girl in me felt incredibly validated to see someone who looked like me leading. Beyond myself, the school itself was able to experience leadership of a different kind. One that was a blend of American and other cultural ways of being. One that resonated with students of color, particularly Hmong students, and their cultural ways of being. I know too many teachers of color who chose to enter the field *because* they never saw themselves in their teachers and wanted to help fill that void.

We need more perspectives, and different ways of seeing and approaching the vast, complicated, and incredibly important work of education. There is room for everyone - this isn't about taking away jobs from some to give to others; but how to expand and make room for more. Our students deserve it. Our families deserve it. Our educators deserve it. *Minnesota deserves it.*

I urge you to support Senate File 3128 to increase teachers of color in Minnesota for all of us.

Thank you.