

March 31, 2025

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Re: Support for SF 1691 – Appropriation for African American-Focused Homeplace

Chair Wicklund and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SF 1691, which allocates \$1,000,000 for a grant to the Birth Justice Collaborative. This funding will be instrumental in strengthening and implementing the African American-focused Homeplace model in Hennepin County, a vital initiative aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes.

African American mothers and families often encounter systemic barriers to accessing quality maternal care, leading to significant disparities in health outcomes. By investing in culturally centered healing and support during pregnancy and the postpartum period, this initiative ensures that more families receive the assistance they require. The Homeplace model delivers essential care and plays a crucial role in addressing racial disparities in maternal and infant health. This model is specifically designed to offer critical care for expecting mothers and support the entire family system throughout the pregnancy experience. It includes programs that engage partners, grandparents, and other family members, ensuring that everyone receives the education, emotional support, and resources necessary for a healthy pregnancy and birth.

Supporting the entire family system is essential, as a collaborative approach strengthens family bonds and creates a nurturing environment for both mother and child. By addressing the broader needs of the family, we can alleviate stress and enhance resilience, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes. This holistic care model will help bridge the gap in maternal health disparities and set a precedent for similar programs throughout the state.

This investment has the potential to create meaningful, lasting change by enhancing access to culturally competent care, fostering better health outcomes, and establishing a precedent for similar programs statewide. I strongly urge you to support [Bill Number] and advocate for its passage to ensure that African American families in Hennepin County receive the care and support they deserve.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this important issue. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if I can provide any further information.

Michael T. Brooks LICSW, LGSW

Melanated Hands LLC