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March 30, 2025

Senator John Hoffman, Chairman
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee
Minnesota State Senate
Minnesota Senate Building

Dear Chairman Hoffman and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate File 2031 on behalf of Restoration for All Inc. (REFA). As the Director of Training & Services at Progressive Individual Resources, Inc., I have had the opportunity to witness REFA's unwavering commitment to providing culturally responsive, trauma-informed mental health and suicide prevention services for African immigrant and refugee communities across Minnesota.

Senate File 2031 proposes an appropriation of \$700,000 per fiscal year for 2026 and 2027 to support REFA's crucial work. This funding is not only timely but essential. Research and data continue to show that African immigrant and refugee communities face disproportionate mental health challenges, including heightened risks of depression, substance use disorders, and suicidal ideation, often compounded by barriers to culturally competent care, stigma, and systemic inequities.

Our partnership with REFA, including collaborative community-based training and outreach initiatives, has been instrumental in building trust and creating safe spaces where these populations can access vital support. Their approach, which is rooted in cultural humility, resilience, and deep community engagement, has already impacted hundreds of lives and continues to demonstrate sustainable, scalable models for wellness and recovery.

This legislation will provide critical resources to expand REFA's outreach, deepen its impact, and ensure continued mental health access for communities that are often left behind in traditional systems of care. I strongly urge the Senate Human Services Committee to advance and support SF 2031.

Thank you for your leadership in addressing mental health equity and for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Oni
Director of Training & Services
Progressive Individual Resources, Inc.