

Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
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April 29, 2026

Chair John Marty and
Members of the Finance Committee, Minnesota Legislature

Re: Letter of Support – SF 4504 Omnibus Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Policy & Supplemental Appropriations

Chair and Members of the Finance Committee:

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage offers this letter in support of SF 4504, recognizing the profound implications this legislation holds for African Heritage communities across Minnesota. Energy affordability, environmental justice, and equitable access to clean energy are not abstract policy concepts for these communities; they are daily realities that shape health, economic stability, and long-term opportunity.

African Heritage Minnesotans experience some of the highest energy burdens in the state, driven by lower homeownership rates, older housing stock, and disproportionate residence in neighborhoods historically excluded from infrastructure investment. Families often face impossible choices between heating, food, rent, and transportation. Small businesses rooted in African immigrant and African American communities struggle with rising utility costs that threaten their stability. These challenges are compounded by environmental inequities that place many African Heritage residents in areas with higher pollution exposure and fewer clean-energy resources.

SF 4504 responds to these realities with meaningful, practical solutions. The creation of a supplemental energy assistance program expands the safety net for households most vulnerable to energy insecurity. The authorization of thermal energy networks, with prioritization for environmental justice communities, opens the door to cleaner, more affordable heating and cooling options in long-overlooked neighborhoods. The bill's support for plug-in solar devices lowers barriers to clean-energy participation for renters and low-income families. Investments in hydrogen, geothermal, microgrids, and other emerging technologies create pathways for workforce development and economic growth that can include African Heritage workers and entrepreneurs when paired with intentional outreach and equitable implementation.

The Council recognizes that equitable energy policy is essential to the well-being of African Heritage Minnesotans. SF 4504 strengthens the state's commitment to reducing the energy burden, expanding access to clean technologies, and ensuring that communities historically left out of energy decision-making are centered in Minnesota's clean-energy future. This legislation advances environmental justice, economic opportunity, and community resilience values that

align with the Council's statutory mandate to advise, advocate, and elevate the voices of African Heritage Minnesotans.

For these reasons, the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage expresses strong support for SF 4504 and urges its passage. The bill represents a meaningful step toward a more just, sustainable, and inclusive Minnesota where African Heritage communities can thrive.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Lolita Davis Carter | Legislative & Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

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The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the State of Minnesota's political, social, and economic resources, policies, and procedures. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units, and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule, or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*

