



LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP 2024



A BUMPY ADJOURNMENT OF THE 93RD SESSION BUT SIGNIFICANT WINS OVERALL

What was supposed to have been a fast and uneventful bonding bill session at the end of the 2023-2024 biennium turned out to be slightly more dramatic than expected in the late hours before the legislature concluded the session. Although a last-minute cash-only capital bill was passed by the House, some high-profile bills, like the End-of-life Option or the North Star Act, failed to secure passage this session, with the latter not even receiving a hearing. Nonetheless, the session witnessed the early signing of significant bipartisan bills, alongside crucial provisions benefitting the Latine communities before adjournment in 2024.

At the beginning of the session, Governor Walz signed a tax bill to adjust standard deduction amounts for tax year 2023, addressing inflation since 2019. He also signed the School Resource Officer (SRO) bill, providing funding and comprehensive guidance for school resource officers.

In a non-budget year with moderate funding targets following last year's \$71.5 billion authorization, these bills set a cooperative tone. However, other issues

such as ride-share wage increases, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), sports betting, Emergency Medical Services, and additional cannabis provisions stirred significant division among legislators as the session progressed.

In the session's final moments, Democrats in the House passed a series of omnibus bills, which were included in a Tax mega-omnibus bill and subsequently signed into law by Governor Walz.



Among the main bills passed, aligned with MCLA's priorities this year, it is worth mentioning the Minnesota Voting Rights Act. This act prohibits any measure that denies or limits any citizen's right to vote based on their race, color, or language, and protects minority voters through redistricting. Also, the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act Bill makes modifications to child welfare provisions to promote the stability and security of African American and over-represented children in the child welfare system. Other important bills that will have an impact on Latine children and families include the transfer of programs from the Department of Human Services to the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families to improve the effectiveness of their services to these young Minnesotans and their families.

Additionally, legislation passed that will impact our communities positively, such as: the Medical Debt bill, which grants the attorney general authority to enforce rules against withholding treatment due to unpaid debt; prohibition of book bans in public schools; combating worker misclassification; penalties for illegal gun purchases by unauthorized persons; reforms for contracts for deed; tenants' rights to form or maintain an organization to improve housing conditions, and setting minimum wage standards for Uber/Lyft rideshare drivers.

This legislative session considered several bills relevant to the Latino community. Many of them are relevant to immigrant communities. Several initiatives focused on job training became law. \$9.6 million in total was awarded to develop the Rise Up Center, a job training facility which will likely be located in Hennepin County. These efforts were championed by UnidosMN in coalition with other workers' organizations.

Other notable outcomes include \$1.5 million awarded to CLUES to provide mental health services through their Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). In terms of

language access, Minnesota now requires driver and vehicle services to distribute important materials in languages other than English in locations with a significant non-English speaking population. MCLA will be among the organizations consulted to determine which locations to prioritize.

The legislature also passed bills to expand the recognition of the tax identification number. Bills related to housing and public utilities were led by COPAL, LatinoLEAD and HACER. All utility providers of energy, gas, etc. requiring social security numbers from their customers will now be required to accept individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITNs), and landlords must not deny a rental application because the prospective applicant provided an ITIN. On the other hand, ITNs will also be valid to apply for urgent insulin medication on the MNsure website, as soon as the newly developed program is implemented.

Unfortunately, some bills fell short. The funds directed towards an initiative to institute a task force to prevent violence against Latina women went to a \$50,000 report to be produced by Esperanza United. Other bills did not make it into law, such as the bill that aimed to ease the requirements for foreign medical graduates to practice in Minnesota. Although there were hearings, they were not prioritized.

Despite the passage of many impactful bills, several initiatives garnered considerable attention but ultimately did not pass, including the bonding bill requiring a 60% majority; the ERA; proposals for an independent redistricting commission; and a federal waiver to pursue the MinnesotaCare Public Option.

In total, 11,020 bills were introduced this biennium. As disparities and inequities persist, it is anticipated that a similar or greater number of bills, including those advocated by our Latine organizations and communities, will continue to shape legislative efforts next year.



LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES IMPACTING MINNESOTA'S LATINE COMMUNITIES

This session, while challenging, proved productive with several important victories for the Latine communities in Minnesota. As we look to the future, MCLA remains committed to advocating for legislative changes that ensure equity and justice for all Minnesotans.

Below is a summary of bills that MCLA was either working on, supporting, or monitoring, highlighting those that passed and those that did not, and their impact:

Bills	Passed	Did not pass	Impact
MCLA's lead support			
2024 ITCA provisions and funding	X		Passed with \$1M one-time appropriation for Aspiring Teachers of Color, though the program will not be made permanent.
Minnesota Latino Museum (Bonding bill)		X	Significant gains were made in planning and conceptualizing the first Latino Museum in Minnesota and the Midwest.
MCLA's priorities			
Ranked Choice Voting		X	Would have expanded optional ranked-choice voting in more local elections.
Independent Redistricting Commission		X	Would have established an independent commission with the authority to draw district maps that are equitable for voters and communities of color to ensure parity in economic investments.
North Star Act		X	Missed an opportunity to foster more trusted relations between local law enforcement and immigrants, preventing racial profiling.



Bills	Passed	Did not pass	Impact
MCLA's support			
CLUES' funding for certified community behavioral health clinics	X		Mental health programs will be funded for continuing innovative and cultural appropriate services (\$1.5M)
Driver and vehicle services, materials in a language other than English	X		Ethnic councils, including MCLA, will be consulted as to the nature of the materials and whether needs are met for non-English speaking customers
Pesticide Applicator exam to be translated into Spanish	X		The Minnesota Department of Agriculture will translate the exam for Spanish speaking pesticide applicators, making the occupation safer.
Task Force on preventing violence against Latina women	X		\$50K grant for Esperanza United to produce a report (due in January 2025) to prevent violence against Latina women and Queer Latines in Minnesota to pave the way for a future Task Force.
Reforms to Contracts for deed	X		Law will increase protections for buyers entering into deed contracts, will protect buyers regarding the recording of the contract, require critical and prominent disclosures (including the language in which the transaction was advertised or negotiated), and assure strong remedies for violation.
Bills MCLA was monitoring with potential impact in the Latine Community			
Rise-up-Center to house a workforce development and job training center	X		Onetime \$9,651,000 appropriation available until 6/30/29
End-of-Life Option		X	More discussion is needed in the Latine communities to understand the implications of this initiative.
Minnesota Care Public Option		X	Although costly, expanding the ability for low-income individuals and undocumented immigrants to enroll in a public coverage plan would address health disparities in the Latino community.
Equal Rights Amendment		X	It would have added a constitutional amendment barring discrimination based on someone's race, class, color, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or reproductive rights decisions. The proposal would have sent the question to voters in 2026.
African American Preservation Act	X		Extends new protections to all kids from backgrounds that are over-represented in the child protection system and adds regulations to ensure more children end up with kin rather than in foster care.



Bills	Passed	Did not pass	Impact
Bills MCLA was monitoring with potential impact in the Latine Community			
ITIN instead of SS# to apply for utility services	X		Expands the ability to immigrant residents to both register for utilities and not to be discriminated to access adequate housing.
ITIN for renters			
A grant for NeoMuralismos de México in Minnesota	X		\$100,000 to expand classes and support artists, a Community Identity and Heritage Grant Program Minnesota Humanities Center.
Funding for the West St. Paul Latine Heritage Festival		X	The legislature misses an opportunity to provide more equitable cultural experiences to our diverse Latine communities
Appropriating money for Los Alegres Bailadores			
Sports betting		X	There is an opportunity to examine how addictions would impact the community if this bill were reintroduced next session.
Child Tax Credit advancing periodic payments	X		The legislation includes repayment protection for families that choose periodic payments, provides resources for successful implementation and additional funding for grants to nonprofits and tribal nations to ensure that beneficiaries learn and apply for the tax credits.
Rural emergency medical services funding	X		This bill will boost emergency medical services in rural parts of the state by \$24 million.



OUTCOMES IN MCLA FOCUSED POLICY AREAS:



LIFELONG LEARNING

INCREASE TEACHERS OF COLOR ACT (SF4107 KUNESH/HF4500 CLARDY)

The Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA) aims to address persistent inequalities in our education system by requiring districts to formulate plans that validate, embrace, affirm, and integrate the cultural and community strengths of all students, families, and employees. The bill proposed increasing investments to meet the state goal (120B.117) of annually raising the percentage of BIPOC teachers by at least 2 percentage points, aiming for Minnesota's teachers to reflect its student demographics by 2040.

For eight consecutive years, under the leadership of MCLA, the three State Ethnic Councils (SEC) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) have collaborated strongly with the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers (TOCAIT) to advocate for ITCA. Through multiple collaborations, MCLA provided support to both chambers' Education and Higher Education committees, including several joint letters of support, and both written and oral testimonies during the committee hearing processes.

For the first time, ITCA combines proposed E12 and Higher Ed investments to meet the needs of the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship program, seeking strategic, modest investments to make a significant difference in three underfunded programs for FY24:

Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarships

The Increase Teachers of Color Act sought a total of \$10M in appropriations, equally divided between the Education Finance and Higher Education Committees, with \$5M from each. This funding builds upon a pilot program appropriation from the previous biennium and incorporated minor edits to language from the 2023 bill (HF381/SF267) that officially establishes the program in statute. The rationale behind this funding is supported by data from PELSB, which shows 2,248 BIPOC teacher candidates were enrolled in preparation programs in the academic year 2021-22. These candidates require financial assistance to continue their education in undergraduate or graduate programs, which are

essential for preparing them to serve in E-12 schools.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention Grants

To support the ongoing need for mentorship and retention of teachers of color, an additional appropriation of \$5M for FY25 was being sought. This request comes in response to the \$9,061,377 that was requested by 47 applicants in FY24, of which only \$3.5M was appropriated. The additional funds are intended to bridge the gap between the demand and the previously limited supply of funding.

Collaborative Urban & Greater MN Educators of Color Grants

There was also a request for an additional \$1M for FY25 for the Collaborative Urban & Greater MN Educators of Color Grants. In FY24, there was a significant demand for these grants, with requests totaling \$6,783,188 from 15 applicants, yet only \$5.44M was appropriated. The additional funding aimed to meet the ongoing needs of this program, which supports educators of color throughout Minnesota.



SESSION CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

This legislative session encountered significant challenges that impacted the progression of the Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA). Notable issues included:

Worthington School Board Decision:

The board voted to remove the Puerto Rican and LGBTQ flags from their classrooms, sparking controversy and highlighting the ongoing debate over inclusivity in educational environments.

Anoka-Hennepin School Board Standoff:

There was a standoff over the school budget related to ITCA-mandated statutes, which stalled budget approvals and underscored the divisiveness of the policy changes proposed by ITCA.

Misinformation in Senate Hearings:

During Senate hearings, there were false claims that the Increase Teachers of Color Act promotes discrimination and violates the Minnesota Human Rights Act, complicating the bill's advancement through the legislative process.

Financial Constraints:

The Higher Education committee faced a low budget target, which served as a major roadblock in securing necessary funding for the initiatives outlined in the ITCA.



SESSION CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

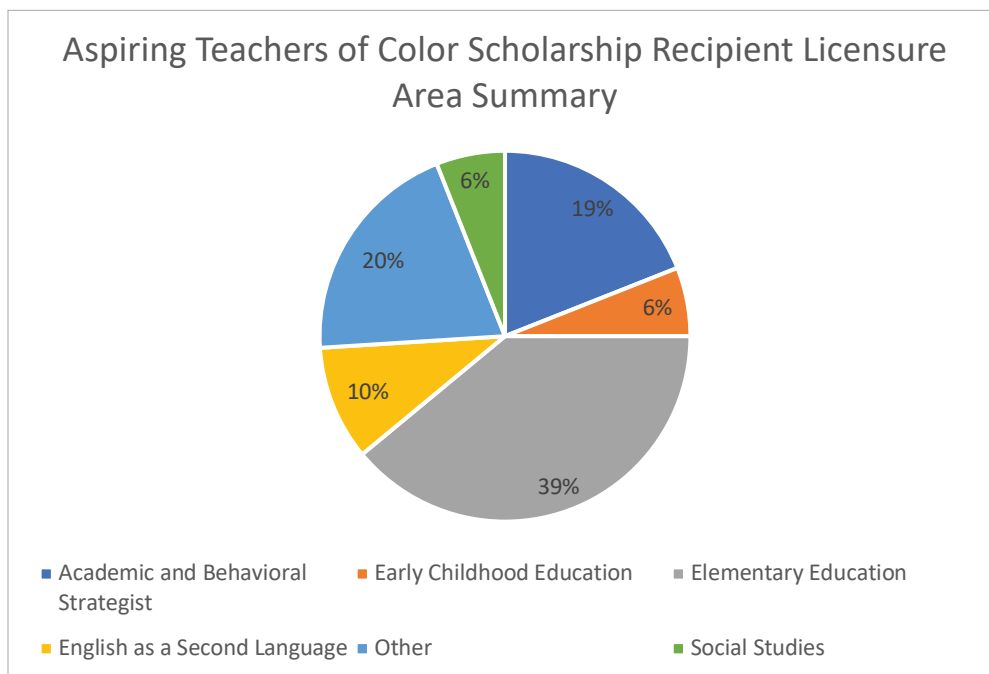
LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES

Despite these hurdles, the E12 conference committee managed to appropriate \$1M to the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship. However, the other two key programs — Teacher Mentorship & Retention Grants and Collaborative Urban & Greater MN Educators of Color Grants — did not receive funding. Additionally, the program remains as a pilot as the language required to adopt it into statute was not included in the final legislation passed by either the E12 or Higher Education committees.

Impact of Implementing the Aspiring Teachers of Color into Statute

The 2021 Legislature enacted the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Program (ATC). The ATC program provides postsecondary financial assistance to undergraduate and graduate students preparing to become teachers who have demonstrated financial need and belong to racial or ethnic groups underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce.

The educational system in Minnesota is facing a significant teacher shortage that spans urban, suburban, and rural schools. Minnesota school systems report a need for more teachers in licensure shortage areas such as English as a Second Language, Early Childhood, Special Education, Career and Technical Education, STEAM, and World Languages. The Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship would have continued addressing this problem while simultaneously addressing the BIPOC teacher shortage. According to OHE’s most recent report for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship from December 15, 2023, the recipient licensure area breakdown is as follows:



Note: The category of “Other” includes licensure fields with less than ten recipients per field: 2 Year Program Early Childhood Education, Business 5-12, Chinese, Communication Arts/Literature (5-12), Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Early Childhood Special Education, Hmong, Integrated Elementary and Special Education, K-12 Vocal Music, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Music (K-12), Parent and Family Education, Physical and Health Education, Physical Education, Physics, Science 5-8, Spanish, Theater Arts, Visual Arts, and Vocal Music 5-12.

Source: [Minnesota-Aspiring-Teachers-of-Color-Scholarship-Pilot-Program-2023-Report.pdf \(senate.mn\)](#)

SESSION CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

DISBURSEMENT

Table 1 below provides Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot program disbursement data for fall 2022, spring 2023, and summer 2023.

TABLE 1. Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Disbursements

Number of Students	Total amount of Disbursement	Average Disbursement per student
205	\$1,537,424	\$7499.63

Source: [Minnesota-Aspiring-Teachers-of-Color-Scholarship-Pilot-Program-2023-Report.pdf \(senate.mn\)](#)

RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY OF APPLICANTS AND RECIPIENTS

Table 2 below provides racial identity data for applicants and recipients as reported on the student application. Students were allowed to select more than one category. Students were not required to choose any category. Still, to receive an award, they must indicate that they identify as a race or ethnicity underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce. Represented in the table below is each category selection. All award recipients who chose not to report their racial identity in Table 2 responded that they identify ethnically as Hispanic or Latino (Table 3).

TABLE 2. Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Racial Identity of Applicants and Recipients (Fiscal Year 2023)

Race	Applicants	Recipients
American Indian or Alaska Native	19	16
Asian	66	55
Black or African American	130	103
White	45	35
Not Reported	31	25

SESSION CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

Table 3 below provides Hispanic or Latino ethnicity identity data for applicants and recipients. Applicants were not required to select any category, but to receive an award, they were required to indicate that they identified as a race or ethnicity underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce.

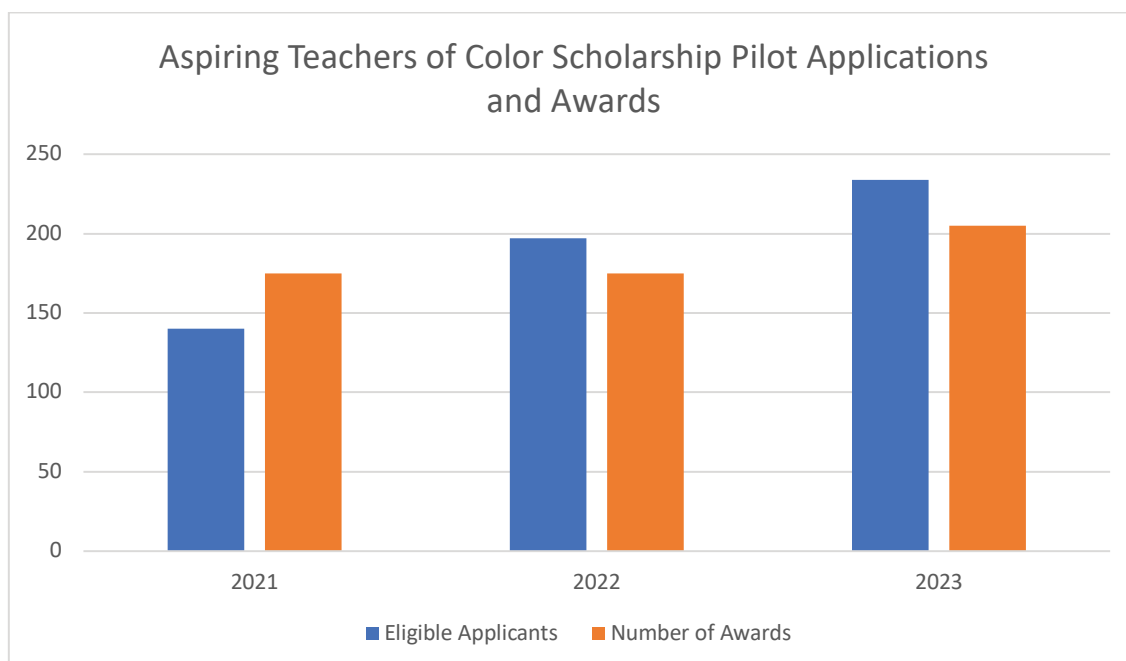
TABLE 3. Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity Identity of Applicants and Recipients (Fiscal Year 2023)

Ethnicity	Applicants	Recipients
Hispanic or Latino	61	50
Not Hispanic or Latino	197	151
Not Reported	9	4

Source: [Minnesota-Aspiring-Teachers-of-Color-Scholarship-Pilot-Program-2023-Report.pdf \(senate.mn\)](#)

Moving forward, MCLA strongly urges increased funding for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship program and for establishing this needed scholarship program in statute. There are approximately 2,000 BIPOC teacher candidates enrolled in preparation programs throughout the state, and they need assistance from this scholarship program to enroll through their undergraduate or graduate programs to become teachers serving 12 students, families, schools, and communities. This proposed investment (\$10M) would provide approximately 500 annual scholarships of up to \$10,000 as investments in aspiring BIPOC teacher candidates.

The table below illustrates the increase in applications and awards for the Aspiring Teachers of Color Pilot Program.



CONCLUSION

Suppose we are to reach Minnesota's educational attainment goal and increase the percentage of BIPOC teachers. In that case, we must create comprehensive systemic changes that include accountability measures and proper funding but, more importantly, are guided by the community that will be impacted.

As we reflect on this session's efforts and outcomes in education legislation, it is clear that progress was made for our stakeholders. Still, more dedicated support and comprehensive systemic changes are needed to meet Minnesota's educational attainment goals. These changes must include accountability measures and adequate funding guided by the communities they are intended to benefit. MCLA remains committed to advocating for these essential changes to ensure Minnesota's diverse and representative educational workforce.



OUTCOMES IN MCLA FOCUSED POLICY AREAS:



ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Latines have increasingly become a larger part of the population in communities throughout Minnesota and the entire country. Despite this growth, Latines continue to be underrepresented and underfunded in the arts. Institutions such as museums representing Latine culture and history are extremely lacking both statewide and nationally. While the Institute for Museum and Library Services estimates a total of 35,000 museums nationally, only about 20 (less than 0.1%) focus on Latinos. The National Endowment for the Arts reports that Latinos rank at the bottom in most indicators of arts access. In Minnesota, Latinos are the lowest-funded demographic in arts and culture. The arts hold special importance for the Latine community, and with the increased presence of Latines, the introduction of more Latine institutions representing heritage, culture, art, and history is necessary.

MINNESOTA LATINO MUSEUM (HF 3603/SF 3483)

HF 3603/SF 3483 sought to appropriate \$10,000,000 for the establishment of the Minnesota Latino Museum – the first major cultural institution

focused on Latine culture, art, and history in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. This bill was first introduced by Rep. Maria Isa Perez-Vega of District 65B, who is leading the bill in the House along with co-authors Kozlowski, Gomez, Clardy, and Kotzya-Witthuhn. In the Senate, it is led by Senator Sandra Pappas, with co-authors Mann, Putnam, and Pha. HF 3603/SF 3483 was one of two high-priority bills led by MCLA this legislative session.

The Minnesota Latino Museum project is set to be led by Neomuralismos, a well-established local Latine arts non-profit. The museum would be located in Harriet Island Park, within the West Side Flats neighborhood – the first place Latines settled in Minnesota—and near the only Latine-focused cultural district in the state, District Del Sol. The Minnesota Latino Museum aims to represent the diverse culture, art, and history of the Latine community while providing a permanent space for Latine artists and other community members to engage in cultural expressions and

creativity.

HF 3603/SF 3483 was introduced and referred to the Capital Investment committees in both the House and the Senate in February of the 2024 Legislative Session. MCLA drafted several written testimonies and talking points in preparation for these committee hearings. However, the bill was not heard in either committee. The MCLA legislative team met with Speaker of the House Rep. Melissa Hortman to discuss HF 3603/SF 3483 and the Minnesota Latino Museum, who expressed approval of the project. The nearly \$1,000,000,000 bonding bill, which would fund local infrastructure projects, included an allocation of \$6,425,000 for the Minnesota Latino Museum. Unfortunately, the bonding bill ultimately did not pass.

The legislation for the Minnesota Latino Museum will be postponed to the 2025 Legislative Session. Despite this setback, MCLA is well-prepared and optimistic about the future prospects of this important cultural initiative.



MOVING FORWARD

The 2024 session has set a precedent for thoughtful, inclusive policymaking that directly benefits our communities. Looking ahead, MCLA will continue to work diligently to build on the successes of this session, ensuring that the voices and needs of the Latine communities are not only heard but also acted upon in future legislative efforts. We remain dedicated to the pursuit of a more equitable Minnesota, where every resident has the opportunity to thrive.



Rosa Tock
Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs

SF 3257

Requiring driver's license agents eligible to provide bilingual services and materials





m MINNESOTA
COUNCIL ON LATINO AFFAIRS

ADVISE AND INFORM ON
LEGISLATION AND **POLICY**
WITH **LATINO** MINNESOTANS

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