



April 12, 2016

Judiciary Committee
Chair: Senator Ron Latz
95 University Avenue W., Room 2109
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Honorable Members of the Committee,

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (“the Council”) submits this letter in strong support of S.F. 3438. As the state agency charged with advising you on behalf of 260,000+ Minnesotans descended from more than 40 Asian nations, and advocating on behalf of this community, the Council knows first-hand our metro area community has benefited from a strong Department of Human Rights. Our partnership has been key to a more informed, engaged, and hopeful community of Minnesotans of Asian descent.

The Department’s duties, particularly investigating discrimination claims and educating Minnesotans about their rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Act, are of great importance to our Council. Minnesota’s Asian Pacific community is a culturally, linguistically, socioeconomically, and religiously diverse community. It is also a majority refugee-experienced community consisting of some of the most vulnerable Minnesotans anywhere in the state and/or the nation. Collectively, anywhere between 30 to 60 percent of our community speak English “less than very well” and are thus considered Limited English Proficient (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey).

While a large portion of Minnesota’s Asian Pacific community resides within the 7-county metro area, our community resides in all 87 counties. Our community is the largest ethnic minority group in the city of Rochester (estimated at 4,830) and the second largest in St. Cloud (estimated 2,500). In Minnesota and across the nation, the Asian Pacific community is the fastest growing ethnic group. This rapid growth in our state brings with it, on one hand, a growing desire amongst our community members to spread out into greater Minnesota in search of opportunities. On the other hand, this growing presence of cultural communities in greater Minnesota calls for the state to strategically invest resources where it may not have consistently done so.

Our engagement with our community informs us that St. Cloud, Rochester, Duluth, and other cities in greater Minnesota are increasingly attractive to Minnesota’s cultural communities. As these newer Minnesotans increasingly pursue their dreams beyond the metro area, a robust Human Rights Department with resources to conduct strong investigative and educational work is vital to addressing disparities and making Minnesota a more inclusive state.

We strongly encourage you to support S.F. 3438. If our office can be of further assistance as you are considering this request, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

Sia Her
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