Today, the Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage (the Council) plans to celebrate the 155th year of Juneteenth, along with many others across this nation. Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Today, the Minnesota Senate plans to adjourn the legislature’s special session without passing any substantial, meaningful police reform. Needless to say, we find this very disappointing and poorly timed.

Millions of people are celebrating an event that marks the end of slavery in the United States. At the same time the Minnesota Senate is deciding to end special session without listening to and partnering with the communities most-impacted, including descendants of those same freed slaves. This decision is sadly aligned with a tradition of denying action and justice to a community suffering at the hands of an unjust Justice system. What happened to George Floyd and countless others who have wrongfully died under the bent knee of police brutality is unjust. Minnesota needs those with the power to do something to take swift action to enact reforms that build trust with Minnesotans and establish an integrity and excellence standard for Peace Officers.

During a week which marks the 100-year anniversary of the Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson and Isaac McGhie lynching in Duluth, the Senate is choosing to ignore the calls for righteous justice. Minnesotans of all backgrounds are tired of political posturing in the face of long-standing and grievous disparities.

The Council is calling on Governor Walz, Senate Majority Leader Gazelka and Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman to negotiate meaningful police reform. Minnesotans of African heritage all across the state hope that Senator Paul Gazelka sincerely stands by his own words and fights for “justice for the Black community.”

In addition, the Council is calling for the State to declare June 19th as the day Minnesota celebrates Juneteenth as a statewide holiday.
Too often the State of Minnesota has taken full advantage of opportunities to disenfranchise and systemically prevent Minnesotans of African Heritage from living full lives of freedom. Today, the State can choose to take long-lasting, substantial action that benefits all Minnesotans.

Thank you,

Nerita Hughes
Chair
The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

Members of the Council
Chair, Nerita Hughes
Vice Chair, Wayne Doe
Treasurer, Fatima Lawson
Secretary, Twauna Mullins

CC: POCI Caucus and United Black Legislative Caucus

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 political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. 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.

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