



### **CMAH Statement on H.F. # 4136: Bill for Somali youth and workforce development.**

Saint Paul MN – On 3/21 a bill for an act for workforce development; appropriating money for Somali young adult and youth job training and workforce development was read in the MN House. The bill was ultimately referred to the Committee on State Government Finance. The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage would like to thank Chief Author, Representative Mahoney for introducing the bill. We'd also like to thank Rep. Lien, Knobloch, Omar, Moran, Pinto, Liebling, Freiberg, Anselmo, Lee, Daynie, Maye Quade and Hamilton for their support of such a critical and bi-partisan bill.

There is a desperate need for this bill. The Somali community in Minnesota is currently underemployed in Minnesota and also experiences higher rates of poverty than other groups. The most recent data has the Somali community experiencing a poverty rate of 58%, with 40% of the community unemployed or not in the workforce. Youth in the Somali community will comprise a growing part of Minnesota's workforce. With Minnesota already experiencing labor shortages, our state cannot maintain the standard of living it is known for without ensuring a well-educated and trained work force for the future. That means no community's youth can be left behind if we are to continue to provide the high quality work force both local and international businesses have come to expect from Minnesota.

H.F. No. 4136 addresses this issue in the Somali Community through providing grants that would provide "internship and mentorship opportunities to aid Somali youth and young adults to build job skills and create pathways to future private and public sector employment." The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage fully supports this legislation. This year the legislation did not receive a hearing at the capitol and will only be considered as an amendment to a larger policy package. This bill addresses a number of acute issues and priorities for the African Heritage community and must remain in public discussion. Lawmakers must ensure one of Minnesota's most valuable resources; our educated and well prepared work force.

\*\*\*\*

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.*