March 11, 2019

Chair Carlos Mariani
House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Division
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: H.F. 334 Expanding the Membership of the Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training

Chair Mariani,

Minnesota statute charges the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage with the duty of advising the Governor and State Legislature on issues that impact the African heritage community. According to the Minnesota Demographer, our agency represents over 425,000 Black and African community members. When surveying a small sample, public safety and police misconduct are consistently identified as a priority issue. Therefore, as the Executive Director of the Council for Minnesotans African Heritage I am calling on the Chair and members of the committee to support H.F. 334 to expand the number of members on the Board of Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) to include four members appointed by the Governor from the General Public with priority placed on communities who historically report high levels of distrust with law enforcement.

Minnesota is home to some of the worst racial disparities in the nation. Among them are the rate at which members of the African Heritage community encounter the police and to the extent those encounters result in force, deadly force, civil rights complaints and public distrust in law enforcement agencies. These outcomes damage the effectiveness of officers to protect and encourage safe communities, leaving communities at risk to increased crime. To resolve this dynamic, communities and law enforcement must work together. Expanding the membership of the POST Board to include members who historically have report high levels of distrust with law enforcement is a simple step in the right direction.

Please support H.F. 334 and give community members a voice at the table where some of the highest standards for officers and law enforcement agencies are governed.

Sincerely,

Justin Terrell
Executive Director
CC: Committee Members

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