



HENNEPIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

A-2400 GOVERNMENT CENTER
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55487-0240

May 6, 2019

Representative Tim Mahoney
Room 365 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Eric Pratt
Room 3219 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Omnibus Jobs and Energy Bill Conference Committee Chairs:

I am writing to express Hennepin County's support for increased overall funding levels for the various workforce development and job training programs in the omnibus jobs and energy finance bill. Hennepin County takes its role as a Workforce Development Board very seriously. Increased investments in this area would allow us to greatly enhance our efforts to coordinate with area employers, educational institutions and job seekers to help develop a highly qualified, well trained workforce that is needed now and into the future.

Specifically, we are encouraged by the \$17,250,000 in general fund dollars and \$11,877,000 in workforce development funds allocated to the Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED's) "opportunity funding" competitive grants in the House version of the bill (H.F. 2208). There are many worthy support, training and equity initiatives supported by DEED, and this is a significant cumulative increase in funding for the variety of programs financed through these grants. Of particular importance is the inclusion of Pathways to Prosperity as eligible for a portion of these funds.

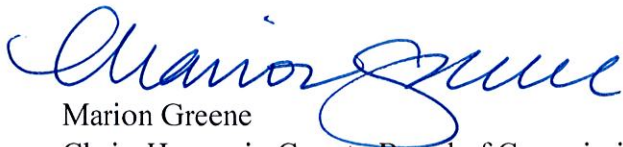
Hennepin County has played an important role in creating eighteen career pathways programs for its own workforce needs and those of other employers. We help train and support residents of marginalized communities for jobs with good wages, benefits and futures in high-demand fields in both the public and private sectors. Our Workforce Leadership Council is made up of our region's largest public and private sector employers as well as education and non-profit partners. Many of the talented, motivated, and dedicated pathways graduates hired by Hennepin County and other employers since 2014 have indicated that they found it difficult to land well-paying jobs before participating in one of these pathway programs. By 2020, our region is forecast to have 62,250 more jobs available than qualified people to fill them. While the Senate bill does include base level funding out of the Workforce Development Fund for Pathways to Prosperity and select other programs, we believe increased funding in this area will better help us connect our region's employers to a diverse pool of well-trained candidates, to meet employers' workforce needs.

Similarly, we appreciate the inclusion of the Cedar Riverside Partnership as an eligible recipient for these opportunity funding grants. The Cedar Riverside Partnership is a public private partnership committed to investing strategically in the sustainable growth and development of the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis. The hub for these activities is the Cedar Riverside Opportunity Center, a one-stop shop for educational and workforce resources and a pipeline to good jobs for people of all ages. Any state funding Hennepin County receives for workforce development programming in this sector would allow us to increase our investment in a diverse, highly-trained workforce that will meet the needs of the region's employers for years to come.

We fully appreciate that there are significant differences between the House, Senate and Governor on budget issues and that you are in for arduous negotiations over the next two weeks. However, we strongly believe that investing in these workforce development programs will pay dividends for private employers, the public sector, and individual workers alike, and we encourage you to fully fund such initiatives.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and if you have any questions about our requests, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marion Greene". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Marion Greene
Chair, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

cc: Omnibus Jobs and Energy Conference Committee Members