

August 16, 2021

Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville
MN 55113

Dear Commissioner Heather Mueller and Members of the Writing Committee,

As Minnesota faith leaders representing a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices, we are united in our conviction that students should graduate from our public schools with an understanding of the tremendous religious diversity in our state and nation, as well as an appreciation of the foundational and dynamic role that religion plays in shaping identity and culture.

For these reasons we are concerned that the proposed changes to Minnesota's K-12 social studies standards ("proposed standards") is a step backwards from existing standards. We are particularly concerned that without the inclusion of specific world religions in the proposed standards, not only will our students receive an incomplete education, but members of faiths whose religions have historically been marginalized, erased, or ignored by society and in the classroom will continue to be unseen and discounted.

We therefore respectfully urge the Minnesota Department of Education and members of the committee to ensure that in the next and final draft of the proposed standards 1) religion is added to the proposed list of elements of social identity, which includes race, geography, ethnicity, and gender in the second draft; 2) there is an explicit listing of a diverse range of world religions in Minnesota's K-12 social studies standards for middle school and high school students, including religions presently excluded from Minnesota's standards; and 3) two new benchmarks are incorporated which ensure that students graduate high school with an understanding of how religions both develop over time and are embedded in all aspects of culture.

Details of these recommendations and specific edits can be found at the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pQ5XKXzKMMfJGkbkmPaS9uRYkEajzyQ73Tw49-4NRKU/edit>

Signed by:

1. Sarah Abe, Minnesota Muslim Leadership Coalition.
2. Sally Abrams, Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and Dakotas (JCRC), Co-Director Speakers Bureau.
3. Jason Adkins, Minnesota Catholic Conference, Executive Director.
4. Mansur Ahmed, Eastern Twin Cities Islamic Center.
5. Sarah Alfaham, Minnesota Muslim Leadership Coalition.
6. Rabbi Morris Allen, Beth Jacob Congregation.

7. Randeep Arora, Sikh Society of Minnesota, Director of Communications and Outreach.
8. Gary Baron, JCRC, Board Member.
9. Sandra Baron, Adath Jeshurun Congregation.
10. Reverend Laila Barr, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church (ELCA).
11. Sabine Bartholdt, ISD 709, Retired social studies teacher.
12. Irene Bartram, JCRC, Board Member.
13. Reverend Lindsey Bina, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church.
14. Kit Bix, Jewish community.
15. Frances Bressman Egan, First Unitarian Society.
16. Dr. William Brian, Community of Christ.
17. Caleb Brian, Community of Christ.
18. Holly Brod Farber, JCRC, Co-Director Speakers Bureau.
19. Patricia Buss, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church (ELCA).
20. Minister Tim Button-Harrison, Church of the Brethren - Northern Plains District, District Executive Minister.
21. Debora Carroll.
22. Janet Cass, Mt. Zion and Temple of Aaron synagogues.
23. Stephanie Chauss, Minnesota Jewish Community Center, Past President.
24. Michael Cohen, JCRC, Board Member.
25. Rabbi Norman Cohen, Bet Shalom Congregation, Founding Rabbi Emeritus.
26. Judy Cook, JCRC, President.
27. Rabbi Jill Crimmings, Bet Shalom Congregation.
28. Reverend Jen Crow, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis.
29. Evangelist Charles Curry, Community of Christ.
30. Ordained Minister, Pen Curry, Community of Christ.
31. Malika Dahir, Pearls of Hope Community Center, Muslim.
32. Nika Davies.
33. Rabbi Alexander Davis, Beth El Synagogue.
34. Steve Davis Temple Israel, Duluth, Board Member.
35. Rabbi Max Davis, Congregation Darchei Noam.
36. Rev. Dr. Curtiss DeYoung, Minnesota Council of Churches.
37. Rev. Dr. Thomas Duke, Minnesota Multi-faith Network/Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
38. Mariam El-Khatib Minnesota Muslim Leadership Coalition.
39. John Emery, Islamic Resource Group, Executive Director.
40. Reverend Katherine Escalante, Faith Lutheran Church.
41. Shannen Espelien Embrace Minnesota (Muslim), Director; and Minnesota Muslim Leadership Coalition.
42. Reverend Stephanie Espinoza, Cross of Peace Lutheran Church.
43. Reverend Jorge Espinoza, Cristo Obrero.
44. Joan Farber, Beth Jacob Congregation.
45. Judith Feldman.
46. Christina Ferdous, Islamic Resource Group.
47. Lisa Ferrier JCRC, Annual Event Coordinator.

48. Cantor Joshua Fineblum, Temple of Aaron, Cantor and Educator.
49. Judy Finger.
50. Lee Friedman, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis, Chief Operating Officer.
51. Michelle Gilats, JCRC.
52. John Goldfine, Temple Israel, Duluth, Board Member.
53. Aaron Goldstein.
54. Jacy Grais, JCRC, Vice President.
55. Dr. Tamara Gray, Executive Director, Rabata (Muslim).
56. Susie Greenberg, JCRC, Associate Director, Holocaust Education.
57. Michael Grossman, Temple Israel, Duluth, Board Member.
58. Prabhjit Gujral, Sikh Society of Minnesota.
59. Judy Halper, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis, CEO.
60. Eilat Harel, JCRC, Board Member.
61. Pastor Peter Harrits, Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA.
62. Cantor Tamar Havilio, Bet Shalom Congregation.
63. Rabbi Justin Held, Minnesota Hillel/Herzl Camp.
64. Julica Hermann de la Fuente, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, Director.
65. John Holt, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church (ELCA), Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries.
66. Reverend Kook Pyo, Hong Unity Church-Unitarian.
67. Susan Horovitz.
68. Khalil Hourri, Islamic Resource Group, Board Member.
69. Steve Hunegs, JCRC, Executive Director.
70. Dr. Morton Kane, JCRC, Board Member.
71. Phyllis Karasov, JCRC, Board Member.
72. Robert Karon, JCRC, Board Member.
73. Susan Kaufman, JCRC, Board Member.
74. Gursharan Kaur, Sikh Society of Minnesota, Board Member.
75. Sarbjeet Kaur, Sikh Society of Minnesota.
76. Interim Pastor, Sharon Kelly, Shepherd of the Valley, Lutheran Church.
77. Naaima Khan, Islamic Resource Group, Board Member.
78. Muqtadar Khan, Muslim.
79. Rabbi Jason Klein, Temple Israel, Minneapolis.
80. Patrice Koelsch, Common Ground Meditation Center, Chaplain and Dharma Teacher.
81. Danya, Kornblum, MN Jewish Community Center, COO.
82. Anne Krisnik, Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, Executive Director.
83. Professor Kadaba Kumar, Hindu Society of Minnesota.
84. Elyse Levine Less, JCRC, Board Member.
85. Rabbi Lynn Liberman, Minnesota Rabbinic Association.
86. Andrew Lifson, JCRC, Board Member.
87. Rev. Dr. Jan Linn, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
88. Judith Liszt, JCRC, Executive Committee.
89. Rabbi David Locketz, Bet Shalom Congregation.
90. Sally Lorberbaum, JCRC, Executive Committee.

91. Bishop Craig Loya, Episcopal Church in Minnesota.
92. David Lui, JCRC, Board Member.
93. Reverend Ruth MacKenzie, Unity Church Unitarian.
94. Reverend Arif Mamdani, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis.
95. Reverend John Matthews, ELCA clergy - Minneapolis Area Synod.
96. Jacob Millner, American Jewish Committee Minneapolis-St. Paul, Director; JCRC, Board Member.
97. Akheel Mohammed, Minnesota Muslim Leadership Coalition.
98. Professor Ned Mohan, Hindu Society of Minnesota, and Regents Professor University of Minnesota.
99. Rabbi Tobias Moss, Temple Israel, Minneapolis.
100. Rev. Dr. Paula Nordhem, United Church of Christ.
101. Mona Noureldin, Rochester Muslim Community Circle.
102. Rabbi Avi Olitzky, Beth El Synagogue.
103. Reverend Dan Olson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
104. Jon Parritz, JCRC, Vice President.
105. Reverend Joshua Patty, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest.
106. Joseph Peilte, JCRC, Board Member.
107. Mary Pickard, Unity Church Unitarian.
108. Rev. Dr. Dan Poffenberger, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church.
109. Dr. Alexis Pogorelskin, Temple Israel, Duluth.
110. Renee Popkin, JCRC, Board Member.
111. Shari Prestemon, Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ, Conference Minister & CEO.
112. Eamaan Rabbat, Rabata, Director of Education – Muslim.
113. Professor Anantanand Rambachan, Hindu Leader; Professor of Religion, Saint Olaf College.
114. Rabbi Debra Rappaport, MN Rabbinical Association.
115. Professor Barbara E. Reed, St. Olaf College.
116. Dr. Glen Thomas Rideour, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis.
117. Ethan Roberts, JCRC, Government Affairs Director.
118. Russ Rubin, JCRC, Executive Committee.
119. Bob Rubinyi, JCRC, Board Member.
120. Jack Seiler, Temple Israel, Duluth.
121. Valerie Shirley, Minnesota Deaf Muslim Community (MDMC), Executive Director.
122. Cantor Art Shragg, Chaplain (Allina Health Hospice).
123. Rhona Shwaid, JCRC, Board Secretary.
124. Zafar Siddiqui, Islamic Resource Group, Board Member.
125. Alan Silver, JCRC, Board Member.
126. Manjeet Singh, Sikh Society of Minnesota, Secretary.
127. Kehar Singh, Sikh Society of Minnesota, President.
128. Reverend Stacey Smith, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Presiding Elder; Minnesota Council of Churches, President.
129. Sheryl Snitkin, JCRC, Executive Assistant.
130. Ruth Solom, JCRC, Director of Operations.

131. Manpreet Sood, Sikh Society of Minnesota.
132. Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker, Mount Zion Temple.
133. Cantor Rachel Spilker, Mount Zion Temple.
134. Rabbi David Steinberg, Temple Israel, Duluth.
135. Cantor Jennifer Strauss-Klein, Mount Zion Temple.
136. Diane Struble.
137. Reverend Rick Summy, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church.
138. Bishop Ann Svennungsen, Minneapolis Area Synod, ELCA.
139. Thomas Swails, Community of Christ, Pastorate Member.
140. Julie Swiler, St. Paul Jewish Federation.
141. Sadia Tarannum, Northwest Islamic Community Center (NWICC), Board Chair.
142. Howard Tarkow, JCRC, Board Member.
143. Pastor Adam Teske, West Union Lutheran Church ELCA, Cologne, MN.
144. Cantor Ben Tisser, Beth El Synagogue.
145. Reverend Karen Treat, Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church.
146. Pastor Liz Trinkle, Community of Christ, Ordained Minister.
147. Michael Waldman, Minnesota Jewish Community Center, Chief Executive Officer.
148. Amy Walstien, JCRC, Board Member.
149. Mary Ann Wark, Mount Zion Temple.
150. Rabbi Aaron Weininger, Adath Jeshurun Congregation.
151. Mark Weitz, Temple Israel, Duluth, President.
152. Diana Widdes.
153. Brian Zakem, Minnesota Multifaith Network, Advisory Council Member.
154. Imam Asad Zaman, Muslim American Society of Minnesota, Executive Director.
155. Laura Zelle, JCRC, Director of Holocaust Education.
156. Dr. Trish Zimmerman, MN United Church of Christ.
157. Reverend Runney D. Patterson Sr., President of Minnesota State Baptist Convention.