

Monday, June 29, 2020

The Honorable Tim Walz  
Governor of Minnesota

The Honorable Melissa Hortman  
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Paul Gazelka  
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Kurt Daudt  
House Minority Leader

The Honorable Susan Kent  
Senate Minority Leader

Dear Governor Walz and legislative leaders:

Minnesota is not in a good place right now.

The brutal and senseless killing of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer just over a month ago has damaged the reputation of Minnesota across the country and globally. This tragic act has exposed weaknesses and shaken assumptions many have held about our state, our communities and ourselves. MBP companies have launched urgent and serious initiatives at all levels within our organizations that are compelling us to listen, to ask new and challenging questions and to formulate actions that will materially address any weaknesses in our policies, practices and behaviors.

There is also much work that needs to be done at the policy level. The tragedy that occurred on Memorial Day has elevated the urgency to address two critical policy issues:

1. Solving racial, economic, education and social disparities
2. Implementing meaningful police reform

It is painful to see almost every national news story report that Minnesota has some of the worst racial, social, educational and economic disparities in the country. The State must assume a leadership role in making substantive policy changes that will materially improve these disparities. This work will require the active engagement of local governments, schools, health systems, employers, non-profits, neighborhoods and all of us at a family and individual level. It will not be a “one and done” exercise – it will require relentless and focused attention, hard work and a willingness to change. We must materially improve outcomes on this core issue.

Police reform is an issue where state legislation must be adopted now. While the vast majority of law enforcement officers serve their communities with integrity, courage, and compassion, there is an urgent need to address police misconduct and increase accountability and transparency. As we discussed in a recent letter to you which was personally signed by more than 80 business leaders from across the state, the Minnesota Business Partnership supports an array of policing reforms including:

- Enhanced models of community policing
- Required reporting of police use-of-force encounters and greater accountability for officer misconduct

- Enhanced training in de-escalation tactics with a focus on identifying and addressing individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, who have Autism Spectrum Disorder, or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Improved background checks for both those wanting to go into law enforcement and routine officer evaluations to ensure the most qualified people are on the police force
- Additional mental health resources for officers that have witnessed critical incidents and improve the utilization of peer-to-peer mental health support systems
- POST Board reforms
- Requiring a duty to intervene and report for officers on the scene of an excessive force incident

Additionally, we believe it is critical to reform the binding arbitration system for police officers who have been disciplined for misconduct. The arbitration issue has been widely cited as one of the key items that must be reformed in order for real change to occur in holding officers accountable and ensuring that police leadership retains the ability to manage their departments.

There are many meaningful common-sense reforms that have already been extensively debated and vetted in the public domain. For example, our recommendations are largely based on those contained in the February 2020 report by the State of Minnesota Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters, which were the product of several public hearings and testimony, and were adopted by consensus by the Working Group consisting of the Attorney General and other elected officials, community leaders, law enforcement and representatives of the judicial system. We believe many of the proposals contained in that report can form the framework for a compromise that can be celebrated by the House, Senate and Governor.

For decades, other states have looked to Minnesota for leadership on a host of public policy issues and business and community initiatives. The eyes of the nation are now watching Minnesota to see what we do next in this profound moment that demands action and change. As business leaders, we are looking at our organizations with a different lens and moving to make change. On a policy level, both GOP and DFL officeholders must reject past approaches and do the same. We respectfully, but urgently, request that you move quickly to address police reforms in a special session and then lean into the hard work of addressing the disparities that have existed for far too long.

The Minnesota Business Partnership is comprised of the CEOs and senior executives of over 100 of Minnesota's largest employers – employing approximately 600,000 Minnesotans - nearly one-quarter of the state's workforce. As leaders of Minnesota's largest employers, we stand ready to work with all parties to build a better, safer, more just future for all Minnesotans. Our employees, customers, and communities are counting on you.

Sincerely,



Charlie Weaver  
Executive Director