Council President Stark,

The argument made by the Dayton's Bluff Community Council in the attached letter is somewhat disingenuous. Both Dayton's Bluff and Frogtown Neighborhood Association are able to achieve "significant levels of involvement from communities of color" because they have the resources – above and beyond City Community Engagement funding – that allow them to do so. In 2014 & 2015 (the most recent years for which data is available), Dayton's Bluff had over $470,000 in revenue and Frogtown had over $370,000 in revenue. The demographic profiles of Frogtown and Dayton's Bluff makes both areas attractive to many funders. All District Councils could do better and more equitable community engagement if they could attract that kind of funding.

All that said, I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiment that "City Council leadership is needed to ensure that new methods for achieving equity and inclusion are adequately funded in the future," whether or not this is achieved through the District Council system. At this point, however, directing Innovation Funds to those District Councils that are currently able to attract non-City funding to do their work will NOT "help lead the way to a more equitable and inclusive St. Paul District Council System." Instead, it will only exacerbate the resource inequities that currently exist between District Councils.

I take issue with one other assertion in the letter from Dayton's Bluff: "The current [Innovation Fund grant] process heavily favors traditionally homogeneous district councils." I would ask: How so? Is there evidence of such a bias? If so, what is the evidence?

Please note that these views are mine and are not the views of the Hamline Midway Coalition.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Jon Olson
Executive Director
Hamline Midway Coalition
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