

## Legislators support Urban League 13th grade initiative

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The Minneapolis Urban League introduced its 13th Grade Pilot Program for enactment by the Minnesota State Legislature. Co-authored by Jeff Hayden and Bobby Champion in the Senate and Raymond Dehn and Will Morgan in the House, the measure could potentially impact over 3,000 young adults ages 18-26, placing them on college and career pathways by 2015.

Growing numbers of Minneapolis youth leave high school lacking a defined career path or the basic skills required for employment. The 13th Grade initiative is a twelve month, non-residential college and career-readiness program focused on the academic, technical, and soft skill competency-building of disconnected young adults who are unemployed, not enrolled in college or haven't identified a career.

"While Minnesota boasts one of the most highly-educated populations as a state, the need for deliberate intervention to spur secondary enrollment, completion, and credential attainment to increase employability for students of color, is apparent." Says Dr. Anita Davis Defoe, Chief Program Integration Officer of the Minneapolis Urban League.

According to forecasts by *Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce*, 70% of jobs in Minnesota will require some level of post-secondary education by 2018. The state ranks 5th in the nation for jobs that will require a Bachelor's Degree and 48th in projected jobs available for high school drop-outs - all indications that some measure of post-secondary education will be vital. "We need to make sure we provide a range of educational opportunities for people," says Senator Champion. "This program is another tool to help some of our most vulnerable citizens set out on a path to prosperity."

"This is an intentional effort by the Minneapolis Urban League to break the cycle of generational poverty and socio-economic disparities impacting our community, says Scott Gray, President and CEO of the Minneapolis Urban League. "This measure will convert those who've fallen through the cracks into contributing, tax-paying citizens able to care for their families."

In an issued statement, Senator Hayden says he 'applauds the work the Minneapolis Urban League is doing to help our young people transition from school to becoming productive, contributing members of the community.' The bill has been referred to the Education Policy Committee for a hearing. If approved, the program would launch Spring 2014.