A NEW GENERATION OF EQUITY

THE TIME IS NOW TO UNITE OUR VOICES AND PUSH FOR A BOLD POLICY AGENDA CENTERING EQUITY WITH AND FOR MINNESOTA’S YOUTH
A New Generation of Equity

In 2020, the twin crises of COVID-19 and the killing of George Floyd laid bare pervasive inequities in Minnesota that disproportionately impact indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth. Yet, these inequities aren’t new; in many cases, they are 400-plus years in the making. These inequities intersect all aspects of life—education, health, labor, housing, the criminal justice system, and more. They tarnish our state’s pride and impede our collective prosperity.

The time is now for bold, ambitious policy action to permanently reverse these inequities. Our youth stand ready to usher in a new generation of equity in Minnesota as both the primary drivers and beneficiaries of this work. This youth-centered and youth-informed policy agenda spotlights priorities within three key impact areas—learning & leadership, economic opportunity, and health & safety—that will give rise to a new generation of equity and achieve Youthprise’s vision of a Minnesota where outcomes for youth are no longer predictable by race, geography, and social economic status.

OUR YOUTH WILL LEAD THE WAY. ARE YOU READY TO FOLLOW?
LEAD:

Modernize the K-12 Education Tax Credit
Increase access to out-of-school time programs and educational computer hardware for low-income youth by:
- Updating the income limit which has remained unchanged since 1997
- Streamlining the claiming and assignment process for families; and
- Revising the definition of “qualified instructor” to reduce discrimination and align with research on youth development best practices.

Add youth to public governing bodies
Require at least two youth members on every school board, public board, council, and commission (including Workforce Development Boards) and allocate funding to provide technical assistance to prepare the governing bodies and youth for success.

SUPPORT:

Establish afterschool community learning grants
Provide state funding for a competitive grant program for out-of-school time programs serving low-income youth.

Increase teachers of color
Enhance pathways like teacher residency programs and support for BIPOC youth to enter and remain in the teaching profession.

Ensure access to advanced courses for BIPOC students
Guarantee that BIPOC students have equitable access to honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSEO, and other dual enrollment courses to ensure they reach their full academic and career potential.

Sustain the Education Partnerships Coalition
Support innovative work with low-income youth and their families across Minnesota by continuing to fund the Education Partnerships Coalition.

Expand opportunities for service-learning
Make learning more impactful by increasing access to service-learning opportunities for all Minnesota students.

Create a family-friendly MDE dashboard
Urge the Minnesota Department of Education to create a family-friendly dashboard and school rating system using a multi-measure assessment, not just test scores.

Raise the maximum age for enrollment in public schools
Provide opportunity youth with more avenues to complete their education by raising the maximum age for enrollment in public schools to 24.

Increase funding for Youth Intervention Program (YIP) grants
Provide resources to aid opportunity youth by increasing funding for YIP grants.
LEAD:

**Fund East African Workforce Development Equity Grants**
Promote career readiness among East African youth by renewing the appropriation for Youthprise’s East African Workforce Development Equity Grants.

**Make secondary school students eligible for unemployment insurance**
Repeal the 1939 state law that prohibits secondary school students from being eligible for unemployment insurance.

SUPPORT:

**Boost funding for Youth at Work grants**
Support career pathways for BIPOC and low-income youth by increasing funding for Youth at Work grants while also exploring opportunities to ensure these grants are distributed equitably and in a manner that promote program sustainability and scalability.

**Increase disaggregation of government workforce data**
Reveal opportunities to bring about greater equity in employment by increasing the disaggregation of workforce data from government agencies at all levels.

**Ensure competitive pay for internships and career exploration**
Prevent unpaid or low-paying internships and career exploration opportunities from limiting access to career pathways for low-income students by ensuring these jobs pay competitive, livable wages.

**Create equitable asset building opportunities for families**
Foster opportunities for families to build assets, especially those that help families save for post-secondary opportunities for youth.

**Provide access to vital documents and prerequisites for driving to all youth**
Ensure that all youth, especially foster children, have access to government IDs and the prerequisites for driving like driver’s education, a driver’s license, and car insurance.
Health & Safety

LEAD:

**Exempt federal meals programs from state sales tax**
Provide an exemption to the state sales tax for nonprofits who purchase prepared food from for-profit vendors for use in the CACFP and SFSP federal meals programs.

**End youth homelessness in Minnesota**
Break the troubling and avoidable trend of youth homelessness once and for all by:
- Increasing permanent affordable housing for youth, especially for pregnant and parenting youth, foster youth, and youth involved in the juvenile justice system;
- Increasing funding for YouthBuild; and
- Making it easier for youth to connect with existing support systems.

SUPPORT:

**Prioritize mental health resources for youth**
Guarantee every young person in Minnesota access to the mental health resources they need by:
- Increasing funding for schools to hire professional mental health counselors, especially those that are representative of the student body; and
- Permitting students to have excused absences from school to address mental health needs.
- Ensuring that youth have culturally relevant and specific resources to address chemical dependency and the impact of the opioid epidemic.

**Advance the Minnesota Coalition for Youth Justice’s policy agenda**
Work in collaboration with the Minnesota Coalition for Youth Justice to reduce youth interaction with the justice system while eliminating racial disparities and encouraging the adoption of anti-racist and culturally sound practices within the justice system.

**Institute Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) for youth**
Reduce summer childhood hunger by providing resources to purchase food during the summer months to families whose children receive free or reduced-price lunch during the school year, modeled after the successful Pandemic EBT program.
Our Mission
Increase equity with and for Minnesota’s indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth.

Our Vision
We envision a Minnesota where outcomes for youth are no longer predictable by race, geography, and social economic status.

Our Values
All of our work is guided by four values:
Youth-centered: Ensure youth voice, participation, and leadership in processes and decisions
Equity: Advance equity and inclusion, disrupt systems of oppression
Self-sustainability: Ensure long-term financial sustainability and economic independence
Impact: Advance our reach by telling our shared story and expanding relationships

About Youthprise
Youthprise was founded as a nonprofit philanthropic intermediary in 2010 by the McKnight Foundation. Since launching, Youthprise has leveraged its financial, political, and relational capital to increase funding for Minnesota youth programming and promote innovation in how our communities work with youth. We do this work by mobilizing and investing resources, advancing knowledge, and advocating for change to innovate systems, structures, and practices that enable youth to thrive. To date, Youthprise has granted over $30 million to youth initiatives and provided training and technical support to over 100 youth organizations. In 2017, Youthprise established a youth-adult co-chair model and increased the proportion of youth between ages of 16 and 25 on our board of directors and committees to fifty percent.

About the Development of this Policy Agenda
A New Generation of Equity was developed with youth front and center. Young people of various ethnicities ages 16 to 25 from across Minnesota participated in several focus groups, which culminated in an idea building session to inform the agenda. Meetings with dozens of allied organizations through the state provided further input. These findings were refined with input from Youthprise’s Policy Advisory Council and staff before being approved by the Youthprise Board of Directors. Thank you to all who contributed to the development of this exciting new policy agenda!