

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kelly Puspoki, Greater Twin Cities United Way
952-334-4545, kelly.puspoki@gtcuw.org

GREATER TWIN CITIES UNITED WAY, MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION, SAINT PAUL & MINNESOTA FOUNDATION COMMIT TO WORKING TO TRANSFORM CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Huda Ahmed to Support the Collaboration

Organizations Launch “Twin Cities Rebuild for the Future Fund” Already at \$1 Million

MINNEAPOLIS (JUNE 5, 2020) — To address a broken criminal justice system and policies rooted in long-standing racism, Greater Twin Cities United Way, The Minneapolis Foundation and the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation today announced a multi-year collaboration with the goal of driving transformational change in the system. To partner on solutions, the three organizations will learn from, support and partner with people who are directly impacted by disparities that result from inequities in the criminal justice system.

[Huda Ahmed](#), a transformational change expert, community activist and Humphrey Policy Fellow Alum, has been hired as director of this work and will support the collaboration in partnership with the broader community.

“This is a long-term commitment. A commitment to stay with our community as we build a new system of justice that doesn’t operate on racial profiling and systemic racism,” said Dr. Eric J. Jolly, President and CEO of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation. “The partnership of our three organizations is an investment in the vision of our community leaders. They know the path to success and change; and we must follow them with our resources.”

“Criminal justice reform is central to creating a truly equitable community,” said R.T. Rybak, President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation. “The status quo is unacceptable, and this partnership is one way we are committed to driving toward lasting change.”

An Urgent Call to Support the Community: New Rebuilding Fund

The outrage and civil unrest sparked by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police have resulted in significant property damage in cultural corridors where Black, Brown and Indigenous people work and own businesses – areas that serve as the life force of surrounding neighborhoods.

As a result, Greater Twin Cities United Way, the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation and The Minneapolis Foundation have established the “Twin Cities Rebuild for the Future Fund” with pooled investments that will provide emergency support for vital micro- and minority-owned small businesses. Currently funded at more than \$1 million, the fund will cover repairs, equipment, technology, building materials, relocation expenses and more.

Those interested can donate at www.tcrebuild.org or by texting TCREBUILD to 51555. Funding will be distributed in late June to multiple community-led business support initiatives and business-focused nonprofits after an invitation-only process.

Initial funders include Ameriprise Financial, BMO Harris, Bremer Bank, the Bush Foundation, CHS, Greater Twin Cities United Way, the Medtronic Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, and the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation.

Inequities in the Criminal Justice System

Transforming the criminal justice system goes far beyond incarceration. Significant issues begin with the racist belief that Black and Brown people are inherently more dangerous.

According to the [Sentencing Project](#), the criminal justice system's rate of contact with people of color is a major cause of the disproportionate rate of fatalities. In fact, a recent story from the [New York Times](#) shows Minneapolis police have used force against Black people at seven times the rate of White people since 2015.

There are many decision points within the criminal justice system. The racial disparity of each decision grows cumulatively as Black, Brown and Indigenous people move through the system, producing unequal outcomes. Some decision points include:

- **Disciplinary Action:** In policed schools, disciplinary actions for students of color put them in the criminal justice system versus the school system ([MinnPost, 2018](#); [Hennepin County Attorney data, 2017](#)).
- **Pre-Trial:** A [2016 report by the Harvard Law School](#) shows 34 percent of Americans are stuck in jail because of the inability to pay bail. And, those who don't make bail are 25 percent more likely to plead guilty, often against their own interest.
- **Sentencing:** Laws are designed to more harshly punish certain classes of offenses in a way that has a disparate impact on people of color. For instance, according to the [Sentencing Project](#), one in three people in the U.S. arrested for drug law violations is Black, although drug use rates don't differ by race and ethnicity.
- **Supervised Release:** Re-entry programs post-incarceration are underfunded, with many parole and probation systems offering supervision with little support, according to the [Sentencing Project](#).

"We are committed to listen to and support Black, Brown and Indigenous people in our community who experience historical oppression and racism to transform our criminal justice system into a system that works for everyone," said [John Wilgers, President and CEO of Greater Twin Cities United Way](#).

###

About Greater Twin Cities United Way: One in four people in the Twin Cities region are experiencing poverty. Greater Twin Cities United Way supports long-term wellbeing by working to provide equitable access for all to a strong education, stable housing, healthy food and good jobs. We do this by bringing together the public, private and nonprofit sectors to solve the community's most pressing needs. Through our public policy work, volunteer engagement, United Way's 2-1-1 hotline, nonprofit leadership support and grant making, we take a holistic, long-term approach to help people meet their potential. That's because when more of us reach our potential, our whole community benefits. For more information, visit www.gtcuw.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation believes in the best of Minnesota and the power of its communities. With roots in Saint Paul and partners across the state, it is Minnesota's largest community foundation and the partner of choice for thousands of donors, nonprofits and community organizations. The Foundation aspires to create an equitable, just and vibrant Minnesota where all communities and people thrive by inspiring generosity, advocating for equity, and investing in community-led solutions. Visit: spmcf.org.

About The Minneapolis Foundation: For more than 100 years, The Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, resources, and ideas to improve lives in Minnesota and beyond. The Foundation manages \$900 million in assets, providing customized and tax-smart giving solutions that result in the average annual distribution of more than \$70 million in grants. The Foundation brings people together to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community. www.minneapolisfoundation.org