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Fax: 612-349-6569  
Stephen Silberfarb  
Executive Director  
JCRC of Minnesota and the Dakotas  
12 North 12th St., #480  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Mr. Silberfarb:

I appreciate your willingness to discuss with me issues of concern to the Jewish community in Minnesota. Since our campaign received the DFL endorsement, we have received tremendous support across the Fifth Congressional District. However, I understand that there are questions about some of my past connections and work, and I am writing to you to address those concerns.

I would like to state for the record that I categorically and unequivocally reject anti-Semitism in any form and from whatever source. Racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, or any kind of discrimination and hate are wrong. This has always been my position, and it is my frame of reference as a congressional candidate.

There has been much speculation about my past connections to the Nation of Islam, including involvement in the Million Man March and the defense of Joanne Jackson, former executive director of the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism (MIAR). Here is my account.

Over a decade ago I worked with local members of the Nation of Islam, as well as other leaders in the African-American community, on a variety of issues primarily involving civil rights, race relations, and the urgent need to address concerns surrounding African-American men. I saw in the Nation of Islam, and specifically the Million Man March, an effort to promote African-American self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, and community economic development. I did not adequately scrutinize the positions and statements of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, and Khalid Muhammed. I wrongly dismissed concerns that they were anti-Semitic. They were and are anti-Semitic and I should have come to that conclusion earlier than I did. I regret that I didn't. But at no time did I ever share their hateful views or repeat or approve of their hateful statements directed at Jews, gays, or any other group.

A second issue of concern pertains to my involvement in a coalition of African-American leaders who defended Joanne Jackson. As you may recall, Ms. Jackson allegedly said that "Jews are among the most racist white people." I attended the MIAR meeting at which her possible dismissal was on the agenda. While some at that meeting justified her comments, I spoke out in favor of increased dialogue between the Jewish and African-

American communities. I believe that Ms. Jackson's alleged remark was clearly bigoted, discriminatory, inappropriate, and even ridiculous.

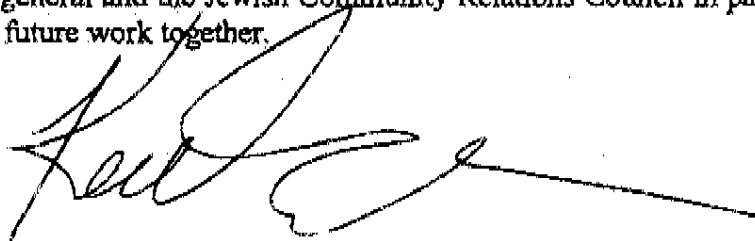
I have long since distanced myself from and rejected the Nation of Islam due to its propagation of bigoted and anti-Semitic ideas and statements, as well as other issues. I have a deep and personal aversion to anti-Semitism regardless of its source, and I reject and condemn the anti-Semitic statements and actions of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, and Khalid Muhammed.

The Jewish and African-American people have both been targets of hate and prejudice, and our peoples have survived some of the darkest periods in human history. Blacks and Jews have much in common, including a shared commitment to equality, justice, and understanding. Indeed, the people I currently represent reside on the North Side of Minneapolis, which not long ago was as Jewish a community as it is today African-American. As an African-American, I understand the pain, injustice, and outrage caused by racism. This worldview helps me understand the Jewish community's similar reaction to acts of anti-Semitism.

Let me leave you with this final thought. I understand why there are questions relating to my connection with the Nation of Islam. My hope here is that I have brought some clarity to those questions. Like most people, I look back at my mistakes with regret. That said, my mistakes have not been futile because I have learned from them. I have grown as a person and a leader, and for the past four years a State Representative. I hope I will be judged on the body of my work as a public servant because that is the person who will serve in Congress. My work in the state legislature has been about building community by building bridges, promoting understanding and acceptance, and bringing hope and opportunity to those with little of either. I have authored hate crimes legislation, stood up to extremists like former Rep. Arlon Lindner, and fought for racial justice and equal rights for all without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

No matter what these next few months bring, I want you to know that I have dedicated my entire life to equality and justice. It has been a consistent theme of my life, and I regard anti-Semitism - like all forms of hatred - to be repugnant. I appreciate your time and attention. I am always available to discuss any issues of concern to the Jewish community in general and the Jewish Community Relations Council in particular. I look forward to our future work together.

Keith Ellison

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Ellison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.