

April 18, 2023

Honorable Cheryl Youakim
443 Minnesota State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Youakim:

Thank you for your leadership and your willingness to engage with us as you and your committee developed a robust Omnibus Education Finance Bill, HF 2497.

Collectively, our organizations' memberships reach throughout Minnesota. Locally elected school board members across Minnesota, rural and metropolitan superintendents, elementary and secondary school principals, special education and curriculum and technology leaders and business officials from all corners of the state. Together, we share our support, and a few concerns, about provisions within HF 2497.

We support and appreciate:

- Indexing future formula increases to inflation to stabilize education revenue, allowing educational leaders to be more planful in their approach to staffing and programs.
- Formula increases of 4 percent and 2 percent, but an increase of 5 percent per year is needed given the historic inflation and cost pressures related to the pandemic.
- Increased funding for the English learner and special education programs to reduce the cross-subsidies.
- Holding compensatory funding harmless and maintaining flexibility with the allocation of compensatory funding.
- Authorizing locally elected school boards to renew an expiring operating referendum at the same level.
- The Read Act.
- Funding to address the teacher shortage and increase the number of teachers of color in our school districts.
- Funding to hire or retain school support personnel.
- Increased flexibility in the long-term facilities maintenance revenue program and including joint powers organizations.
- Permanent funding and expanded access for voluntary pre-K program.
- Increased funding for community education programming.
- Allowing school social work services provided by a mental health professional to be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.
- The Computer Science Education Advancement Program.
- The Special Education Teacher Pipeline Program.
- The Building and Cyber-Security Grant Program.

We respectfully oppose:

- Requiring negotiation of class size, student testing, and student-to-personnel ratios.

- Making hourly school employees eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer break without a funding mechanism.
- Reducing from 120 to 90 the number of days of teaching service a probationary teacher must annually complete during the probationary period.
- Requiring a school board to meet and negotiate with the exclusive representative before adopting e-learning days and pay full wages and benefits during an e-learning day.
- Allowing adult basic education and early education family education teachers to obtain tenure or continuing contract.
- Eliminating the pathway from Tier 2 to Tier 3 for teachers who have taught for three years without a summative evaluation that placed them on an improvement plan.
- Limiting administrators' discretion in student discipline and ability to protect the safety of students and staff.

Chair Youakim, we appreciate your thoughtful work and commitment to public education. We look forward to working with you in the remaining weeks of the session to arrive at a final bill that stabilizes the funding system by focusing on the general education formula, addressing the significant cross-subsidies, and refrains from enacting unfunded mandates.

Sincerely,

Association of Metropolitan School Districts



MN Association of School Administrators



MN Association of School Business Officials



MN Association of Secondary School Principals



MN Elementary School Principals Association



MN Rural Education Association



MN School Boards Association



Schools for Equity in Education

