

February 21, 2022

Dear Members of the Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee:

Every Minnesota child, no matter what they look like or where they live, deserves to attend a high-quality, welcoming school that is transparent and accountable to taxpayers. SF1525, which establishes education savings accounts to be used for private schools runs counter to this goal. That is why school administrators and school board members across Minnesota oppose SF1525.

We oppose SF1525 because the bill violates the spirit of public education in the following ways:

- Private schools can deny admittance arbitrarily and do not offer equal access to all students. Private schools close their doors to children for many reasons, including the student's special needs, the faith followed by the student's family, race, immigration status or sexual orientation. Public schools accept all students.
- Private schools are not accountable to citizens or state policymakers. They operate with little oversight, few financial or academic reporting requirements, lower standards for teachers and no accountability for poor results. An [audit](#) of the Arizona education savings account program showed lax financial oversight and a failure to flag accounts at high risk for fraud. According to this study, fraudulent purchases were made for items such as beauty supplies, music albums and movies, and even a transaction at a seasonal haunted house.
- Vouchers do not improve student achievement. Recent studies of the [Louisiana](#), [Indiana](#), and [Ohio](#) voucher programs revealed that students who used vouchers perform worse academically than their peers. In addition, studies of voucher programs in [Alabama](#), [Milwaukee](#), [Cleveland](#), and the [District of Columbia](#) found that students offered vouchers showed no improvement in reading or math over those not in the program.
- As public school administrators and school board members we hold a basic principle that taxpayer dollars for public education MUST stay in public schools and that our students who choose public schools be fully funded, which our state has yet to accomplish.

Rather than diverting taxpayer dollars to nonpublic schools, we would ask state policymakers should focus their efforts and state resources on addressing the needs and challenges facing our 870,000 public school students by fully funding public education first. The state budget surplus offers lawmakers a historic opportunity to stabilize the education funding system by closing the massive shortfalls in the special education and English learner programs. In addition, it is critical that lawmakers address the mental health challenges facing students and staff as we emerge from the pandemic and address the educator workforce shortage.

We look forward to working with you to address the needs of our public schools and students in the 2022 session.

Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)	
Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD)	
Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)	
Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)	
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	
Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association	
Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA)	
Schools for Equity in Education (SEE)	 SEE Schools for Equity in Education