

April 18, 2023

Honorable Mary Kunesh
3209 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Kunesh:

Thank you for your leadership and willingness to work with us as you and your committee developed a robust Omnibus Education Finance Bill, SF2684.

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 the Senate Omnibus Education Finance Bill.

Previously, we shared our support and concerns about the Senate Omnibus Education Policy Bill. Our letter today focuses on the Omnibus Education Finance Bill.

We support and appreciate:

- Increases in the basic education formula of 4 percent and 5 percent, but 5 percent per year is needed given the historic inflation and cost pressures related to the pandemic.
- We also support linking the formula to inflation in the future to stabilize education funding and allow educational leaders to be more planful in their approach to staffing and programs.
- Increased funding for the English learner and special education programs to reduce the cross-subsidies.
- Authorizing a school board to renew an expiring operating referendum one time. We support making this authority permanent.
- The Read Act and strongly encourage full funding for professional development and curriculum.
- Funding to address the teacher shortage and increase the number of teachers of color in our school districts.
- Increased funding to hire or retain school support personnel.
- Allowing school social work services provided by a mental health professional to be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Increased flexibility in the long-term facilities maintenance revenue program and including joint powers organizations.
- Permanent funding for the voluntary pre-K slots.
- Increased funding for community education programming.
- Allowing a student in grade 11 or 12 to earn up two credits for their time working in a health care provider facility.

We respectfully oppose:

- Requiring 80 percent of compensatory revenue to be allocated to the building generating the revenue.
- Making hourly school employees eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer break without a funding mechanism that does not impact the classroom.

Chair Kunesh, 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 refraining from enacting unfunded mandates.

Sincerely,

Association of Metropolitan School Districts



MN Association of School Administrators



MN Association of School Business Officials



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MN Association of Secondary School Principals



MN Elementary School Principals Association



MN Rural Education Association



MN School Boards Association



Schools for Equity in Education

