

I am writing to urge your support for Playworks and its efforts to secure hearings for House Bill HF2638. As a school counselor deeply committed to the well-being and development of our students, I believe that these bills represent a crucial opportunity to enhance the educational experience for children across Minnesota.

I work at Wellstone Elementary in St. Paul where our physical aggression incidents have almost doubled when we compare pre and post Covid physical aggression incidents (school year 2018-2019 physical aggression incidents: 340, school year 2022-2023 physical aggression incidents: 550). I know that consistently having Playworks in our schools would significantly affect the aggressive behaviors we have experienced post Covid.

At Wellstone Elementary in St. Paul, we had a partnership with PlayWorks from 2013 to 2017. When we compare behavior data from that time, and our reports show that physical aggression incidents went down by almost half (2011-2012 physical aggression incidents: 387, 2016-2017 physical aggression incidents: 180). These remarkable data points show just how vital play and social connections are to our students' education. Our students are struggling to make positive connections with each other and thus creating community. As you know, when students don't feel safe they are unable to access their higher cognition thinking and therefore their academic learning is greatly affected by this.

Playworks is lobbying at the Capitol for the need for State Level Programming and Intervention to improve Minnesota children's health, well-being, & life outcomes. For over 25 years, Playworks has given kids foundational skills for success on the playground, in the classroom, and in the community. If these bills pass, more kids in MN will get to experience the benefits of play.

I am in full support of these bills being passed as every school, student, and educator needs Playworks practices in their schools, and these bills are essential for Minnesota students' success.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important issue. Your support for Playworks and these bills would be greatly appreciated.

Brianna Moeckel

Licensed School Counselor at Paul & Sheila Wellstone Elementary

I am writing to urge your support for Playworks and its efforts to secure hearings for House Bill HF2638.

As an educator, I view schools as having an opportunity to support the whole child. Academically, socially, emotionally and physically. I am not a physical education teacher, I'm a science specialist teacher for 500 students in grades kindergarten through 5. Playworks has given me essential tools that allow me to reach more students through invaluable purposeful play in my classroom. I believe that these bills represent a crucial opportunity to enhance the educational experience for children across Minnesota.

I started working with Playworks in Fall of 2022, with 20 students, from 4th and 5th grade, that I helped coach to implement cooperative recess games to help regulate a trying time for our students at Castle Elementary in Oakdale. I was fortunate enough to get my own playworks course in the summer of 2023 and have since been manifesting how I can get playworks to stay a part of our Elementary day to day for future years to come. This year we should also be adding a weekly onsite facilitator from Playworks to work with individual grade levels to explore cooperative games together, allowing a new culture of purposeful play to grow quickly to all students and staff at Castle Elementary! I expanded my Junior Coaching crew to 30 students in our building. We meet weekly to learn new games to build a culture of connection and fun within our recess and movement breaks within classrooms, including my science room where I continue to play games with multiple grade levels. Each week, we discuss how students are leading and running cooperative games at recess or within their own classrooms.

The amount of joy that 4th and 5th graders faces to be dramatically cheering for classmates and advocating for younger students is impressive. I've had introverted coaches show initiative to teach new games, alert staff to recess issues quickly, learn names and interests of kids they spend time coaching. I have seen the attitudes of my students improve across classrooms at our school, including willingness to lose graciously and cheer on classmates. Playworks gives purpose to play and creates a fun environment for cooperation, competitiveness and builds skills in physical education that many of our students need. Investment in kids with the help of Playworks will foster true purposeful play and a love for fun with classmates. This is what school is about. Playworks is essential to keeping our youth innocent!

Playworks is lobbying at the Capitol for the need for State Level Programming and Intervention to improve Minnesota children's health, well-being, & life outcomes. For over 25 years, Playworks has given kids foundational skills for success on the playground, in the classroom, and in the community. If these bills pass, more kids in MN will get to experience the benefits of play. This is priceless! I am in full support of these bills being passed as every school, student, and educator needs Playworks practices in their schools, and these bills are essential for Minnesota students' success.

Your support for Playworks and these bills would be invaluable!

Angela Killeen

Educator at Oakdale Elementary

I am writing to express my support for Playworks and its efforts to secure hearings for House Bill HF2638.

As an elementary school principal in St. Paul Public Schools, I am deeply committed to the well-being and development of our students and I believe that these bills represent a crucial opportunity to enhance the educational experience for children across Minnesota.

I have been an educator for over 20 years and have seen a huge shift in the skills that our students bring with them. One critical area of need is in the area of play in the elementary school and its positive impact on student well-being. We have had the good fortune of working briefly with Playworks, where they had staff come out to do PD with our staff to engage in some of the activities. They then spent the day with all students during recess, facilitating the games both on the playground and in the classrooms. Within a short amount of time, we saw the positive impact it had on building community, developing social skills, provided opportunities for positive interactions between students, and encouragement from one another. These soft skills are needed more than ever in our schools, post-Covid. It is critical to support programs like Playworks.

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I am in full support of these bills being passed as every school, student, and educator needs Playworks practices in their schools, and these bills are essential for Minnesota students' success.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important issue. Your support for Playworks and these bills would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

May Lee Xiong, Principal

Txuj Ci HMong Language & Culture Lower Campus

I am writing to urge your support for Playworks and its efforts to secure hearings for House Bill HF2638.

As a Principal of an urban school I am deeply committed to the well-being and development of our students, I believe that these bills represent a crucial opportunity to enhance the educational experience for children across Minnesota. As an urban school, our students do not have the opportunity that their suburban counterparts regarding play, playgrounds, and being outside.

Many of our families live in transitional housing or unsafe areas to play outside; as we all know, play is critical to growing balanced and healthy children no matter where they live or go to school. If we are going to grow a workforce that can collaborate and work together to create a better world, it must start on the playground. That old saying, "All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" is not far off. So many skills are learned on the playground and through play.

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Thank you for considering our perspective on this important issue. Your support for Playworks and these bills would be greatly appreciated.

Terese Shimshock
St. Peter Claver Catholic School Principal

House Bill: HF2638

My name is Melissa Machovsky I am a 4th Grade Teacher (title) at Marcy Arts school and I'm asking for you to support HF2638.

Emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the biggest needs I have observed in my classroom is the Social-Emotional learning and development of my students. With ~~the~~ the help of Coach Travis, ~~of~~ Playworks has provided opportunities for my class to practice being safe and respectful while having fun together. Students are choosing to play together instead of engaging in anti-social behavior. I wish that all children could be given more opportunities to grow in this way.

This type of investment is an investment for the children and future of our state.
Please vote yes to HF2638.



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My name is Sam Beck, Behavior Intervention Specialist at Crossroads Elementary within Saint Paul Public Schools and I'm asking you to support HF2638.

I have seen firsthand that when we invest in students' social and emotional learning and maximize recess time, we increase academic engagement and decrease bullying and discipline incidents. Here is an example of how this type of investment has impacted my school and why I believe it would be a good investment for all of Minnesota.

Having the multitude of services through Playworks has been an incredible boost to our school. Having our site coordinator and coach become valued members of our school community has been a great bonus. The Community Learning Times in the classroom have helped bolster teacher and student routines, fostered great social and emotional learning opportunities, and provided time for fun community building. As a result of these times, we have seen stronger classroom communities that rely on the skills they learn during these times. The Junior Coach program has been a great tool for select students to shape their leadership skills and learn how to be changemakers in their school community. It has been a treat to see them engage with their younger peers in a way that fosters positive community building and fun. The skills that our Junior Coaches are learning are helping them in the present, and will also directly translate to their future as they continue to grow into the people they will ultimately be. The same can be said about all of the services that Playworks provides our school. The work Playworks does builds a great foundation in students to hone skills and strategies that they will use as they grow into changemakers in all communities in which they exist.

This type of investment is an investment for the children and future of our state. **Please vote yes to HF2638.**



House Bill: HF 2638

My name is Sarah Nisley, I am a special education teacher at Battle Creek Elementary school and I'm asking for you to support HF2638.

I have seen firsthand in my self-contained special education room and throughout our elementary school, when we prioritize social and emotional learning and maximize recess time, students feel a higher sense of belonging. This belonging increases academic engagement and decreases bullying and discipline incidents. Here is an example of how this type of investment has impacted my school and why I believe it would be a good investment for all of Minnesota.

As a self-contained special education teacher, I am truly grateful Playworks is at my school. Playworks' evidence-based program has strengthened my school's overall community. Playworks empowers students to be leaders through play, and because of this mission, I have seen students at my school from various grade and ability levels come together, naturally strengthening life and social skills through active play. My students, many who have severe social skills deficits, have played group games with others at recess because a peer invited them to play. This is a huge milestone for my students who often choose to play alone or do not yet have the skills to initiate play with their peers. This one small example shows the large impact Playworks has had on our school community, making ripples through the empowerment of each student.

This type of investment is an investment for the children and future of our state. **Please vote yes to HF2638.**

House Bill: HF2638

My name is Jessica Schoenberg, I am a First Grade Teacher (title) at Cherokee Heights school and I'm asking for you to support HF2638.
SPPS

I have seen firsthand that when we invest in students' social and emotional learning and maximize recess time, we increase academic engagement and decrease bullying and discipline incidents. Here is an example of how this type of investment has impacted my school and why I believe it would be a good investment for all of Minnesota. The Playworks coaches use an evidence-based program to deliver amazing, active activities and games during winter months for indoor recess. I make a list of those games and the children remind me often to play these games during morning meetings.

This type of investment is an investment for the children and future of our state.

Please vote yes to HF2638.

House Bill: HF2638

Continued from Jessica Schoenberg
pg 1:

When we use Playworks games during our morning meetings, I see a positive change for the children and they are more academically engaged. They are able to build community each morning with these games, and get out some stress or extra energy before focusing on learning.

At recess there is positive change as well. Our school's Playworks coaches come once a week to teach the children, and teachers, organized games. Then, during recess when our coaches are not present, the children gather to play the organized games.

This type of program is an investment for the children and future of our state.

Please vote yes.

My name is Ashley-Anne Tomechko and I am a first grade teacher at Marcy Arts in Minneapolis. I am writing in support of House Bill: HF2638.

As a teacher and parent of a young child, I have firsthand experience with the benefit of investments in children's social emotional learning (SEL) and how it maximizes a student's academic development and increased engagement in school. I have seen an increase in student's self esteem and executive functioning development which directly impacts the reduction of bullying and discipline incidences not just in school but in the community and at home.

Evidence- based SEL programs are a critical component to a positive school culture. This culture allows students to be problem solver, leaders and advocates for one another. On a daily basis, I see students using the tools they have learned in Playworks to solve disagreements. SEL programs teach students and staff have common language and strategies around empathy and conflict. I have seen students use these tools to create an inclusive environment, allowing all kids to be successful and feel included in peer interactions. Kids who feel included by their peers, have better attendance and a greater engagement in the classroom.

It feels ridiculous that we need to ask for this investment. As a society, we can either invest in children and communities and prevent lifelong challenges now or we will invest on the criminal justice system and addiction rehabilitation programs later on. The choice seems rather simple.

Please vote **Yes** and invest in our children.

Much respect,
Ashley-Anne Tomechko

ashley.tomechko@gmail.com

House Bill: HF2638

My name is Sharon Moser, I am a Teacher (title) at Battle Creek El. school and I'm asking for you to support HF2638.

As a teacher for more the 20 years I recognize the benefits of programs that help children to regulate their emotions and their bodies. Playworks is one of the few programs that serves all of the children. ^{Prek-5th} Kids have never been in more need for help with their emotional well being. Playworks should be expanded and replicated. All kids need this kind of support to get to a place where they can learn.

This type of investment is an investment for the children and future of our state.
Please vote yes to HF2638.