



March 14, 2023

Dear Chair Youakim and Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HF 2497, which contains key elements of Governor Walz's education proposals.

The Minnesota Business Partnership is comprised of the 110 CEOs and senior executives from Minnesota's largest employers. One of the Partnership's core principals is ensuring Minnesota provides all students with world-class education and economic opportunities.

Ensuring every child can read well at every grade level is critical for future success. Reading is an education issue and an economic issue because literacy opens doors for students in academics and life. However, reading proficiency disparities are startling – according to NAEP and MCA data less than half of current fourth graders are currently reading at grade level.

The Partnership commends Governor Walz and Commissioner Jett for their determination to improve reading instruction and student support through the BOLD Literacy Plan, which is represented in HF 2497. The Partnership's Education Committee has met with Governor Walz, education commissioners, and administration officials for over two years as the BOLD Literacy Plan has been developed, and we are pleased to endorse the plan as one of the most important steps Minnesota can take to ensure all students are reading well at every grade.

The BOLD Literacy Plan includes several important tools demonstrated in other states to improve reading instruction:

- Training and professional development for educators and leaders on evidence-based literacy practices and curriculum based on the science of reading
- Screening tools to determine student needs and progress
- Access to effective literacy experiences for all students through multi-tiered systems of support

Minnesota is fortunate to have a sizeable state budget surplus, and it is important that the state invests it in the BOLD Literacy Plan to improve and intensify science of reading, evidence-based reading instruction strategies.

While investing in early literacy is crucial, there are other aspects of HF 2497 about which the Partnership has concerns. Namely, we oppose the proposal to link the general education formula to inflation because it limits the ability of future legislatures to not only manage the state budget but also have important conversations about the impact and use of education funding. Similarly, the proposal to automatically renew operating levies limits the ability of citizens to provide input on property tax measures. We urge members to carefully review these proposals.

Sincerely,

Amy Walstien
Senior Policy Director
Minnesota Business Partnership