

March 17, 2021
House Education Policy Committee Testimony

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee, good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to come speak to you today. I am Dr. Lucy Payne, Mahtomedi School Board Chair and faculty in the School of Education at the University of St. Thomas.

I am here today to support House File 1644. This bill allows us to think beyond what we can do now and imagine what could do and be for all learners. It opens the door to ask the good kind of “what if” questions.

- What if schools and districts could do things different such that we can truly prepare our kids for the future?
- What if we could eliminate barriers to learning while still holding schools accountable?
- What if there was more flexibility and local control for districts to make decisions based on the needs of their students?

I want to address redefining hours of instruction, in this bill. This redefinition eliminates a barrier for innovation and improvement. This redefinition has the potential to allow us to consider many “what ifs,” and as a school board member, these are some of what ifs it allows me to ask and our district teachers and leaders to begin to answer:

- What if we could offer credit recovery in the moment in high school before students failed?
- What if we could offer remediation to students without taking away their elective courses?
- What if schools and districts could continue to offer asynchronous learning opportunities to expand learning beyond the school day?
- What if motivated, passionate students could enroll in two hybrid courses at the same time?
- What if students could participate in service learning and be an integral part of their communities while still in high school?
- What if we could offer authentic career exploration through internships and capstone projects?
- What if students had the opportunity to experience more independence in their learning environment?
- What if students could learn anywhere, anytime?
- What if we could personalize learning for each student?

This bill would allow districts to explore answers to these questions and begin to implement models and practices that meet the needs of their students. The redefinition of instructional hours would remove a barrier and allow each district to answer the “what if” questions for their learning context. There have been many different education organizations working together on this language and we will to continue to work

collaboratively to improve the language during the session in the best interest of students, teachers, and schools.

You have the ability to support districts in creating innovative solutions to the needs of students by redefining seat time as proposed. I ask “what if” because I believe our teachers and administrators can and want to find innovative ways to meet the needs of learners while still meeting the Minnesota Academic Standards. I can envision some potential ideas, but our classroom experts - teachers and administrators - will have many more. So ask yourselves -- What if we could redefine instructional hours?

Thank you.