



April 30, 2024

Members of House Capital Investment Committee,

Thank you for the work you have done to prepare the bill before the Committee today. As Commissioner of Education, I appreciate the opportunity to share input about the provisions related to education in the House's bonding bill HF5220.

First, we are very appreciative of the continued investment in library construction grants. This program has experienced significant interest and uptake since its inception. Libraries are hubs for so many communities around the state, and the resources provided by library construction grants provide opportunities for much needed facilities improvements and accessibility upgrades for them. Since the library construction grant program started in 1994, the state has awarded 170 grants, benefiting libraries in 70 of Minnesota's 87 counties. The \$17.8 million invested over the course of the program has drawn \$112 million in local match funds. The additional opportunities provided in this bill will continue to fund critical infrastructure support to our libraries statewide.

I also want to take this opportunity to note concerns on the bill's approach to our federal grant for multipurpose community facility projects and how it may impact our currently approved federal application. As the Department shared during committee testimony last week, the language would require MDE to seek amendments to our approved application from the U.S. Treasury. This could ultimately delay the timeline of rolling out this program. The proposal only allows the grants to go to local units of government. This would prohibit grants to community organizations and non-profits, possibly depriving communities the solutions best tailored to their needs. Additionally, the definitions of individuals that can benefit from funded programs may limit the reach to benefit some of the intended beneficiaries under our approved application. Finally, it's possible that that proposal does not allow MDE to partner with the MIFs and GTCUW for grant administration, monitoring, and support. The state stands to lose from these partners' great expertise and capacity. We look forward to continuing discussions around this proposal.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input and for the inclusion of funding for the library construction grant program. The positive impact of this program continues to grow. We look forward to the conversations ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willie Jett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Willie Jett
Commissioner of Education