

Minnesota House Committee on Education Policy  
Remote Hearing on HF3401, Education Matters  
Monday, February 28, 2022  
Written Testimony of Daniela R. Garcia, State Policy Support Partner, Pearson

Chair Richardson and Members of the Education Policy Committee,

My name is Daniela Garcia, I am a State Policy Support Partner for Pearson. I work to support Minnesota Connections Academy (MNCA) and Falcon View Connections Academy (FVCA) which are state-wide online learning programs. Together MNCA and FVCA enroll approximately 4900 students state-wide in Minnesota.

MNCA and FVCA are committed to providing a high-quality education that is personalized to meet each student's unique needs and interests. Students and families have access to special education, English language, counseling, and tutoring services. As public schools, both schools adhere to state and federal education laws. They are no different than traditional public schools with respect to providing access to student services.

Where MNCA and FVCA are different is the students and families they serve. The students attending MNCA and FVCA have chosen a full-time online learning program for a variety of reasons. This could include the need for a safe learning environment, additional support for students with disabilities and support for students with medical needs.

With respect to HF3401, here are several areas of concern. Specifically, Article 1, Section 9, Minnesota Statutes 2020, section 124D.095 Online Learning Option and Article 6 Section 1, Minnesota Statutes 2020, section 124E.02 Charter Schools. There is confusion around the amended definitions and inconsistent referencing of definitions that make it difficult to understand whether current full-time online programs, as previously defined, would continue to exist. Additionally, there is new charter school language that adds new definitions including that of a complex market study.

We have spoken with staff at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to seek clarification on the intent behind the changes to online learning options and charter school and to discuss the concerns identified in HF3401. It is our understanding, that the MDE seeks to broaden online learning to all LEAs and not change full-time online learning programs allowed under current law. Additionally, we will work through the definitions contained in the charter schools' section and the components of a market study.

Chair Richardson I look forward to working with you and the MDE to clarify and amend HF3401. We are encouraged that the intent of the language will allow us to continue to support the students, parents and educators of Minnesota Connections Academy and Falcon View Connections Academy. However, at this time, we cannot support HF3401 as it is currently drafted.