Chair Stephenson, Members of the Committee: My name is Tamara Gillard and I am the Executive Director of Minnesota Tech for Success, formerly Minnesota Computers for Schools. Tech for Success is a nonprofit organization, now in its 25th year.  Our mission is to create digital equity for students by partnering with schools and educational organizations to provide technology access, engaging STEM Programming, and IT workforce development in underserved communities.

MN Tech for Success recycles, refurbishes and repairs donated computer technology, which is placed in schools and nonprofits in Minnesota. Since our founding in 1997, we have placed over 98,265 computers in Minnesota, creating digital equity for students across the state by increasing access to technology. In addition to providing access, we also provide free IT certification training for individuals, most from under represented populations who are preparing for entry level employment in the IT field.  In addition, we began offering an opportunity to our IT graduates for paid internships to gain hands-on skills working with computer equipment, better preparing them for the workforce.

I am here today in support of HF1156.  It is critical for us to have the right and ability to repair computer equipment.  It is extremely important that we have the necessary parts and access to manuals to refurbish equipment for students all across Minnesota.  Between 2020 and 2021, we placed over 5,000 laptops with students for distance learning.  Our equipment also provides low-cost technology solutions for our schools whose budgets are already strapped.  The ability to repair also provides much needed work training experience, preparing individuals for jobs in our community.

Please support HF1156, so that we can provide quality computers and digital equity for all.

I offer you the following testimonials that speak to the importance of the right to repair.  Sincerely, Tamara Gillard

Educator Testimonials:

*"Purchasing computers and laptops from Minnesota Computers for Schools allowed us to scale our technology up really quickly. It would have taken a lot longer to upgrade our technology access if we had purchased new because it's much more expensive"*
– Tim Schleicher, Database & Tech. Dept. Administrator, Community of Peace Academy

*It means a lot to the students and schools who received computers and free education because of your support. This is what Paul Creager, Curriculum and Media Arts Coordinator at Gordon Parks High School said: "Access to laptops outside of school exponentially increases students' ability to complete homework, correspond with employers, universities, friends, and teachers via modern communication methods, and become literate with 21st-century technology in a lower stress environment."* – Paul Creager, Gordon Parks High School.

*"With our tight school budget we would NOT have the equipment we have without the purchase program MCFS offers - we are very thankful that we can purchase great equipment at a fair price."*
- Ron, Norman County West School District