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January 29, 2022

Re: House File 21: Full-Service Community Schools

Dear Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

This year, the Minnesota PTA will celebrate our 100th Anniversary of supporting parents, students, and educators across the state. We currently have over 200 local units in Minnesota with over 4,000 members representing all forms of schools, including rural, suburban, urban, district, and charter. The Minnesota PTA is a state congress of the National PTA, the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation, with over 20,000 local units in all 50 states.

The mission of the PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. *MN PTA strongly supports the additional funding for the development of community schools in House File 21 because community schools can be a model for all schools to implement best practices in "engaging and empowering" families.*

One of the main pillars of community schools is Active Family, Student, and Community Engagement: "Community schools build trust and partnership by actively attending to relationships with families, students and community leaders. These authentic relationships lead to active family engagement, which is essential to helping families be more involved in the decisions about their children's education. Through active family engagement, the school can better understand and respond to persistent barriers and identify family and community assets. Students do better academically and socially when their parents and educators are working in partnership." (*Community Schools Playbook*, Partnership for the Future of Learning)

Both the National PTA and Minnesota PTA also strongly believe families are essential partners to schools in the shared mission to help every child reach their full potential. The National PTA's "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships" have been developed to set the bar for how schools and parent organizations work together to support student success. (<https://www.pta.org/home/run-your-pta/family-school-partnerships>). The Minnesota Department of Education includes these "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships" in their "Community Schools and Four Pillars Resources" guide on Active Family, Student and Community Engagement.

The five National Standards help schools operationalize family engagement as they:

1. Welcome All Families
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Support Student Success
4. Speak Up For Every Child
5. Share Power
6. Collaborate With The Community

The financial support in House File 21 will give more Minnesota PTA members the opportunity to work with their schools to enhance partnerships with families and together to make a difference for student outcomes. We want all families to have the opportunity to experience true family engagement and believe this additional funding for community schools will move us closer to that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Nelson
President, Minnesota PTA

Cathy Nathan
Advocacy Commissioner, Minnesota PTA