

April 9, 2026

Dear Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in regard to HF 3119. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) is responsible for licensing 110,000 teachers in Minnesota, establishing the state standards required to be a licensed teacher, approving the state's nearly 700 teacher licensure programs, and overseeing teacher ethics cases.

In 2024, the legislature established The Teacher and Paraprofessional Compensation Work Group with the purpose of making recommendations to the legislature on providing competitive compensation to teachers and paraprofessionals in Minnesota's public elementary, middle, and secondary schools. PELSB was given the responsibility of facilitating this work group, which allowed board members and staff to hear firsthand from teachers, administrators, and community members. Over the course of nine meetings, the group discussed how to better support Minnesota's educators. The group's recommendations are detailed in the [Teacher and Paraprofessional Compensation Report](#), but can be summarized as:

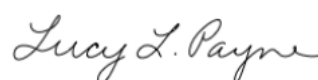
- \$60,000 minimum salary for teachers (\$80,000 with a master's degree)
- \$25/hr minimum pay for school employees and minimum hours to guarantee benefits
- Required school employee enrollment in a health insurance plan that mirrors Minnesota state employee benefits
- All teachers and ESPs should be able to retire at or above age 60 with 30 years of service credit at zero penalty

Research shows that the teacher pay gap, the weekly wage discrepancy between what teachers earn and what similarly educated professionals earn, is 31.1% in Minnesota. This is higher than both the national average and the pay gaps in neighboring states. In fact, we ranked 44th in the nation for our teacher pay gap. We know Minnesota's teachers deserve better. They deserve compensation that reflects the great respect many of us hold for the profession. By establishing a minimum teacher salary, this bill will make strides to recognize the honorable work our teachers do serving Minnesota's students. In closing, we would like to reiterate PELSB's support for HF 3119 and encourage committee members to vote in support of it as well.

Sincerely,



Yelena Bailey, Ph.D.
PELSB, Executive Director



Lucy Payne, Ph.D.
PELSB, Chair



April 7, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

On behalf of Minnesota's locally elected school board members, superintendents, school business officials and community education professionals, we are writing to share our collective perspective and concerns regarding HF 3119. As the leaders tasked with the daily governance and operational management of our state's school districts, we believe it is vital to address how this proposal impacts the balance between competitive compensation and district stability.

We begin where we all agree: attracting and retaining high-quality educators and staff is the cornerstone of student success. Providing competitive compensation is a responsibility our school boards and administrations take very seriously. However, HF 3119 introduces a one-size-fits-all mandate that risks undermining the local systems designed to balance fair pay with the comprehensive needs of our students and facilities.

As school leaders, we are directly accountable to our communities for both educational outcomes and fiscal stewardship. Our role involves more than just setting salaries; it requires us to manage a complex budget that ensures safe buildings, modern curriculum, reliable transportation, and robust nutrition programs. All of these essential services are currently facing sustained inflationary pressure. While we are grateful for recent funding increases, those dollars must stretch across the entire operational spectrum. Without additional, flexible, and ongoing funding to match these rising costs, statewide compensation mandates force us into untenable trade-offs, potentially shifting resources away from the very classrooms and student supports we aim to strengthen.

Furthermore, HF 3119 disrupts the long-standing model of local control that allows districts to thrive. Currently, school boards and employee groups work together through collective bargaining to create contracts that reflect local labor markets, regional cost-of-living differences, and community priorities. This process allows us to recognize professional experience and reward advanced training in a way that fits our specific workforce needs. A uniform mandate, such as the proposed \$60,000 to \$100,000 teacher base or the \$25 per hour minimum for unlicensed staff, strips away this essential local flexibility.

In practice, this proposal shifts decision-making authority away from our local communities and toward the state without providing the sustainable funding necessary to support those requirements. While we appreciate that the bill does include funding to bring staff up to the minimum salary requirements, we urge that this funding also account for pay parity adjustments for current employees who already meet or exceed those minimums, ensuring that the compression of wages does not undermine retention and morale across the workforce. Without full, ongoing funding, from a governance and administrative standpoint, our groups see this as an unfunded mandate that compromises our ability to lead effectively.

We urge the committee to preserve the integrity of local governance and the collective bargaining process. If the goal is to improve compensation statewide, we encourage the Legislature to focus on increasing flexible, ongoing funding. This approach would allow us, as local leaders, to raise wages responsibly while ensuring we continue to meet the full range of our students' educational needs.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Minnesota's public schools.

Sincerely,

Minnesota School Boards Association
Minnesota Association of School Administrators
Association of Metropolitan School Districts
Minnesota Association of School Business Officials
Minnesota Community Education Association