



March 15, 2022

Dear Members of the Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota is writing to support HF951 and HF3402. As adults, we need to recognize the impact of the pandemic on student's mental health and develop policies that support students, not punish them.

Prohibiting k-3 students from being suspended is strongly supported by NAMI Minnesota. Suspensions do not produce good outcomes - just the opposite. There are studies showing that children suspended in younger grades feel rejected by the school, have a negative attitude towards school, lose trust in the adults, are 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, and experience academic failure and grade retention.

We need to teach these young children these skills and ensure that those who need it can access treatment. Instead of suspending young students and thinking that a suspension will change behavior, let's teach them how to deal with frustration, let's teach them some mindfulness practices, let's understand the trauma they have experienced and help them through it. NAMI Minnesota would strongly support increased funding for social emotional learning especially after the experience of the last two years.

We know that moving your body releases endorphins in the brain. Endorphins simply help us feel better. Moving or exercise reduces stress, boosts self-esteem, lessens anxiety and depression. It also has a positive impact on your heart, blood pressure, muscle tone and more. Recess provides an opportunity for young students to move and help them feel better physically and mentally. Withholding recess as a punishment may actually make it harder for a student to follow directions and be calm and attentive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director



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