



MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Urban Education. Global Citizens.

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April 24, 2018

Representative Paul Torkelson
Chair, Transportation Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
381 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Senator Scott Newman
Chair, Transportation Policy and Finance Committee
Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3105
95 University Ave W
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Representative Torkelson and Senator Newman,

We write in opposition to HF 4437/SF 3837, legislation that would reduce the state's general fund by \$200 million thereby shrinking resources available to the education of students in Minnesota.

This legislation puts in jeopardy our state's constitutional obligation to ensure the fundamental right to an education for all children throughout the state. The education clause of the State Constitution reads:

The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.

The Minnesota Supreme Court further defined the state's obligation to students:

"In 1993, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that this constitutional provision elevated education to a "fundamental right," a phrase with significant constitutional implications. The court said that the education clause of the constitution is "not simply a grant of power" but, in fact, "a mandate" on the Legislature. And the court noted that the education clause "is the only place in the constitution where the phrase 'it is the duty of the legislature' is used." *"

The constitutional obligation is clear and so, too, is our state's recent inability to meet its obligations. Over the past fifteen years, the state's basic per pupil funding formula has failed to keep up to inflation. Compared to



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2003, the State's basic per pupil funding formula is \$596/per pupil below the inflation-adjusted amount. While the cost of transportation, utilities, salaries, health care, and construction and maintenance have increased at or above inflation, state aids have not.

The same holds true for special education funding. The underfunding of special education means the Minneapolis Public Schools must use \$56 million of our general fund to cover state and federally mandated services. We wholeheartedly agree that these services are necessary and appropriate; we want the state to fund the services they are mandating.

HF 4437/SF 3837 will make it more likely that the chronic underfunding of schools will continue. We ask that you oppose this legislation.

Nelson Inz
Chair, Minneapolis School Board

Ed Graff
Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools

cc: Minneapolis Legislative Delegation
Minneapolis School Board