



## TESTIMONY OF

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Director of Development  
CFACT

Before the  
Education Policy Committee  
On HF2297

## OPPOSITION

March 13, 2023

Thank you, Ms. Chairperson and members of the Committee for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House File 2297.

I serve as the Director of Development for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, a think tank that focuses on free market solutions for environment and energy concerns. I also reside in Lake Elmo, MN and my children attend Stillwater School District schools. I volunteer on a number of environmental initiatives here in Minnesota to keep MN beautiful, care for our natural environment, and at the same time protect jobs and families. I originally am from the Duluth area, which formed my love of the great outdoors at a young age.

Before the Committee today is HF2297, a bill which would mandate Climate Justice curriculum to be taught in public and charter schools in Minnesota. I believe this is a mistake. The language itself is incredibly divisive, at a time when Americans and Minnesotans need to come together. Environment & Earth Science is already being taught in schools, from Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. When you introduce politics into the classroom, you open the door for a whole lot of problems that can distract from a learning environment.

### **The Problem**

Schools today have endured some of the worst years of political chaos in our history. From battling on covid protocols to hot button political issues to school safety, parents are concerned about what is going on in schools.

Recent test scores in Minnesota are indicative of a serious problem.

From a *Kare 11* article:

*In Minnesota, average eighth-grade math scores fell from 291 in 2019 to 280 this year, one of the largest point declines in the country, and the worst average score for Minnesota in more than three decades (since a 275 average score in 1990).*

*Math scores for fourth graders dropped by nine points, from 248 to 239.*

*Reading scores were also down across Minnesota, but not as much as math.  
Fourth-grade reading scores fell seven points, from 222 in 2019 to 215 this  
year.*

Having our children focus on issues like “Climate Justice,” which are politicized and based on pseudoscience and emotion rather than facts, will do nothing to improve math, reading, science, or any other scores. At CFACT, we are very familiar with the Climate Justice movement. Climate Justice materials typically ignore how impoverished communities in Africa and Asia lack affordable energy provided by fossil fuels, and even criticizes efforts to bring them such energy. “Climate Justice” advocates also ignore the child and slave labor employed by China for mining the rare earth minerals needed to make solar panels and wind turbines. And Climate Justice advocates gloss over how renewable energy jacks up energy prices that impact the poor the hardest, forcing them to choose between “heating and eating.” Our kids will learn nothing of these .

So, we don’t need “Climate Justice” propaganda being fed to our kids. We need to focus our educational attention on the things that matter- reading, math, & comprehension. This political play by special interest groups does nothing for the education of Minnesotan children, and actually harms them by putting special political interests ahead of the educational needs of our children.

#### **THE SOLUTION:**

I urge you to vote against this measure. Doing so would put kids first. It is imperative that we instead focus taxpayer resources on boosting math and reading scores.



We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, stand in solidarity with the Youth Environmental Activists at Climate Generation and express our strong support for the bill regarding climate justice instruction in schools ([SF 476/HF 2297](#)). This is a critical step in educating future generations about the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change and more importantly how the coming generations can be a part of the solution for environmental justice.

The effects of climate change, and the inequities that it exacerbates, are not only environmental but social as well. This bill addresses these interconnected issues head-on by creating a program focused not only on the detrimental environmental harms of climate change but its impact on marginalized communities across the world. With its focus on exploring solutions and ways that youth may participate in the changes for the future, this bill has the potential to empower all students in Minnesota to be agents of change for a more sustainable future.

We are confident that this bill will inspire generations to come, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to be true climate leaders. If passed, it will pave the way for a more just and equitable society, where the Minnesotan populace can address the impacts of climate change with exigency and compassion.

Interested in learning more? Read our [breakdown of the bill](#) and the recent summary article in the [Star Tribune](#).

We are grateful for your leadership on this issue and for your commitment to creating a more just and sustainable world for our youth. The Youth Environmental Activists applaud you in your efforts in championing this crucial cause and are hopeful for the future that this bill represents.

We strongly urge you to pass this legislation in order to lead in the fight for climate justice.

Signed,



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Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy



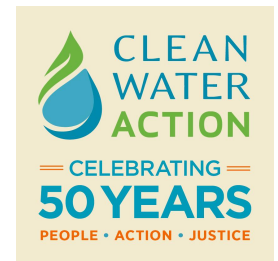
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Education Policy Committee Members:

Climate education is named as a **key factor in the 2020 United States “Pathway to Net Zero” carbon emissions reduction plan**. Our own federal government recognizes the necessity of preparing young people to meet the future through high quality climate education. It’s our time to respond to that call. I’m writing to you as a member of the teacher education faculty from Hamline University’s School of Education and Leadership. At Hamline, I also serve as Director of our environmental education Masters degree and co-director of our undergraduate environmental studies program. I’ve been working in teacher education for over 20 years.

For over 25 years, Hamline has been responding to the **increasing demand among teachers who wish to be prepared with accurate knowledge, so they have the comfort and confidence to address issues of climate change** and its intersections with environmental, economic and social justice. And I can tell you, there is a strong demand. Teachers across the board want to be prepared with the knowledge, skills and abilities to teach children and youth about climate change and climate justice. They know that in order for young people to approach the future with a sense of justice, agency, and hope, they need to understand not just the science of climate change but how it affects them, their peers, and people around the world. It is the biggest challenge we have ever faced.

Parents want their children to learn and understand climate change. According to a Yale survey, **over 78% of Americans support climate change education in schools**. American families overwhelmingly support teaching our children about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to global warming – in all 50 states and over 3,000 counties nationwide. Teachers and parents agree that in order to be scientifically literate, informed members of society, students must have a fundamental understanding of

climate change including its purported causes and effects, as well as the inequitable impact of climate change felt by people worldwide.

**This bill not only supports our teachers in delivering the best, most scientifically accurate information to our students, it also responds to increasing demands by parents** for Minnesota schools to deliver the best education to their children. It will also help students develop their civic awareness and be prepared to meet the challenges of climate head-on, as well as preparing them to compete in a job market that is increasingly in need of climate-literate individuals.

**A 2021 global study by UNESCO revealed that youth overwhelmingly cited frustration** with their own lack of knowledge and understanding about climate change, lack of skills to get involved to affect change, and lack of awareness about how to get involved in local efforts and policy. While that news is grim, it presents us with a once-in-a lifetime opportunity to support Minnesota students. Not only can we provide Minnesota students with scientifically accurate, locally-relevant information about climate science and its intersections with equity, but **we can also help prepare Minnesota's future workforce: climate-related jobs are expected to grow by 10% by 2030. Comprehensive climate education provides Minnesota students with foundational knowledge, skills and abilities that will be crucial for most of the jobs of the 21st century.** In today's job market, high school and college graduates will inevitably intersect with the environment in one way or another. Jobs in fields as diverse as public health, STEM, education, natural sciences, business, economics, political science, computer science, finance, and communication as well as the trades.

**This bill allows educators across Minnesota to close opportunity gaps for future generations,** and it ensures that we come together to build the strongest education system possible: one that meets the needs of students in every corner of the state, preparing them to meet the most significant challenge of our time. Our young people deserve the opportunities that climate education brings- it prepares them with the education, skills, and tools they need in order to be informed, engaged citizens working together collaboratively toward a bright, sustainable future that is equitable and just. Simply put, in order to be effective at co-creating a sustainable future for all Minnesotans, students need to understand climate change and its disproportionate impact on communities across the state, the nation, and the globe.

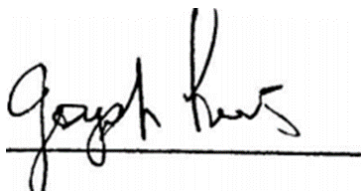
At Hamline, we have a long history of teacher education and support. Our environmental and climate education programs are internationally-recognized, highly successful, decades-old, and nationally accredited. We stand ready to meet the challenge and are prepared to assist teachers and school districts

by offering resources, continuing education, and sustained support. **We see how hard teachers are already working to serve Minnesota's students and we are eager to support them in integrating climate education into the work they are already doing.** We believe we owe it to today's young people to ensure they are well-prepared to meet the challenges of our future with accurate information, a depth and breadth of understanding, and the skills to develop resilient, creative solutions that are just and equitable for all of us. We hope you agree.

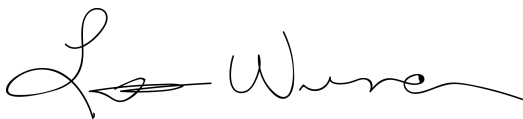
Thank you. Please feel free to contact Dr. Born with any questions.



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