



March 16, 2021

Chair Richardson  
463 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Distance Learning Provisions HF1644

Dear Chair Richardson and members of the committee,

Distance learning has been a massive challenge for students, families, and educators alike. A growing number of studies have found that learning loss—particularly for low-income students and students of color—is something that cannot be ignored and it's imperative that students can safely receive in-person instruction as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, we must respect parents concerns and wishes regarding which learning model they choose for their children. We know that families of color are more hesitant to send their children back to in-person learning<sup>2</sup> which highlights the importance, particularly from a racial equity lens, of ensuring that there are robust systems and checks in place to ensure that if families choose to keep their children in distance learning that it is rigorous and engaging.

In balancing these two realities, it is the imperative that the Legislature take action to ensure that, if there is a one year extension of distance learning, that students—particularly those traditionally underserved—are not left behind. The Legislature must provide a comprehensive framework that acknowledges and addresses where distance learning has fallen short, builds on what did work, and keeps students at the center.

EdAllies supports House File 1644 because it provides guidance to districts and charter schools, grounded in best practices that were developed out of COVID-19 school closures by doing a study to better understand what did and didn't work over the last year, which ensures that best practices are replicated while other practices are abandoned. The goal of this is to improve on practice and ensure that if a family chooses to keep their kids in distance learning that it will be meaningful, rigorous, engaging, and age-appropriate.

We are grateful to Representative Edelson for her leadership in convening stakeholders to collaborate and further refine the proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Shaver".

Matt Shaver  
Policy Director

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<sup>1</sup>Kogan, V. & Lavertu, S. (January 2021). "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Student Achievement on Ohio's Third-Grade English Language Arts Assessment." The Ohio State University; Kuhfeld, M & et. al (November 2020). "Learning during COVID-19: Initial Findings on students' reading and math achievement and growth." Collaborative for Student Growth.

<sup>2</sup>Minnesota Department of Education. (July 2020). Fall Planning Survey. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/publicEng/>