



Education Policy Committee  
April 28, 2020

Hello Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Michelle Koffa and I am the Policy Manager at EdAllies, an advocacy organization that works to advance educational equity and remove barriers so all Minnesota students can receive a rigorous and engaging education. I am writing to support Section 5 of HF3186 as amended.

EdAllies supports Section 5 in HF3186 as amended as it would prohibit lunch shaming practices. This provision requires participants of the National School Lunch Program to adopt, post, and implement school lunch policies in multiple languages, it prohibits participants from denying school lunch to students who qualify for free or reduced lunch despite outstanding balances, requires participants to provide meals to participating students in a respectful manner, and requires all communication relating to school meal debt to be communicated between a student's parent/guardian and school trained staff.

According to a 2014 report from the United States Department of Agriculture nearly half of all districts use some form of shaming students to compel parents to pay outstanding lunch debt. The state of Minnesota is no different. News stories across the state show schools stigmatizing, demeaning, and shaming students for outstanding lunch debt. HF3186 as amended would put necessary measures into place to maintain the dignity of all students as they seek the basic human need of food.

All students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect despite their ability to afford a school lunch. To ensure this we must keep this issue between adults and not shame, demean, or stigmatize our students.

Thank you for your time and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Michelle Koffa  
Policy Manager, EdAllies

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MK", enclosed within a circular scribble.