

OPPOSITION TO HF874: TESTIMONY FROM DAVID ZIFFER, HOPKINS, MN

I became an education activist in 1994 when I realized that the public schools in my mostly white affluent suburb were dysfunctional. I operated an [after-school reading program](#) from 1997 to 2002 that remediated children who had failed to learn to read in multiple school districts; we turned them into fluent readers at a small cost. From this I realized that public schools are [awash in destructive faddism](#) made possible by their receiving unconditional funding in the absence of competition.

Decades of U.S. Department of Education data, published in its [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), along with other data, make it clear that public school performance is consistently dismal across the United States, and that differences in children's performance are due mostly to their home environments, specifically: parental education level, family income, marital stability, and community safety. None of these factors is addressed by [HF 874](#).

Minneapolis Public Schools [spend about \\$26,000 per year per student](#), making MPS one of the most lavishly funded districts in the nation. The new constitutional wording of HF 874 will be used as an excuse for activists to sue both state and local taxpayers to increase district funding, despite obvious evidence that such extreme funding does not correlate to positive outcomes.

Our federal Bill of Rights should act as a model for defining "rights." All ten describe *freedoms from government oppression*. All but one of them (the right to trial by jury) cost us nothing. The idea that goods and services can be declared as "rights" and that their quality can be ensured by writing the word "quality" into legislation is incredibly naïve.

This bill provides no roadmap for achieving "quality" either inside or outside the schools. It could easily be construed as prohibiting parents from home schooling or from choosing private schools. Activists will use the new wording to sue us into over-funding urban districts that relentlessly underperform lesser-funded non-urban districts. These new taxes will reduce *everyone's* ability to finance things that actually improve children's outcomes. I urge all legislators to vote against it.

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