

House Ed Policy Committee



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Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota recognizes the negative impact of structural racism on children from BIPOC communities. The outcomes are poor when we fail to provide the supports children need and when we do not address how children are treated. We are particularly concerned about the disproportionality in suspensions, in the EBD category of special education, the use of seclusion and restraints and being placed in segregated special education classrooms.

While there are many recommendations contained in the report NAMI Minnesota would like to focus our support on the following:

- Increase training around and implementation of trauma-informed schools
- Increase mental health supports by funding more school support personnel and school-linked mental health programs
- Support early childhood education, including early childhood mental health consultation
- Provide alternatives to suspension especially for students in K-3
- Add additional reviews for children from BIPOC communities who are in the EBD category and who are in a regular classroom less than half the day to ensure that the children are receiving the supports and services needed to move back to the regular classroom. Build on strategies used by Intermediate Districts to follow the child back to their regular school
- Increase funding to schools that have higher usage and disparities around the use of seclusion and restraints so that they can engage specialists to review the situation and provide recommendations on how to decrease their use

We want all children to have the opportunity to receive a quality education. To do this we simply must address the barriers children face. This includes recognizing that past practices such as redlining, discrimination in home ownership and employment, displacement, boarding schools, and more impact the future of our children today. Thank you for the time and attention put forward in this report and we hope that it leads to meaningful change.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director