



March 28, 2023

Re: HF2497 Education Finance Omnibus Bill

Dear Chair Youakim and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

Thank you for the effort and time you and your committee put into the House omnibus education finance bill, HF2497. We have greatly appreciated your willingness to engage with our organization and the general public throughout the session. We applaud the committee for advancing numerous provisions that will build a stronger K-12 education system for Minnesota students, including provisions that will directly benefit historically underserved students and the teachers that serve them.

There are a few areas of concern that we hope you will consider modifying before advancing the bill—specifically around changes that would undermine pathways to licensure—a counterproductive and unnecessary proposal that could have significant unintended consequences for schools in the midst of a teacher shortage.

Below, we highlight some of the provisions we believe will have the most significant positive impact, as well as the few we believe can be modified to strengthen the bill.

We support:

- **Moving to Non-exclusionary Discipline for K-3 Students:** Improving student discipline, and ensuring our approaches support students' long-term growth and development is critical. This bill helps move Minnesota forward by:
  - Limiting dismissals for K-3 students (Article 2, Section 26)
  - Providing a clear definition for non-exclusionary discipline (Article 2, Section 26)
  - Limiting recess detention & withholding of mealtime participation (Article 2, Section 39)
  - Providing funding for non-exclusionary discipline training (Article 2, Section 61)
- **Removing Barriers & Supporting Training for Aspiring Teachers:** The bill contains several provisions that will help aspiring educators build their skills and enter the classrooms that need them, including:
  - Bachelor's degree exemptions for teachers in specific fields (Article 5, Section 26)
  - Programming to develop heritage language and culture teachers (Article 5, Section 54)
  - Creating a special education teacher pipeline program (Article 5, Section 61)
  - Establishing reporting requirements for teacher hiring & terminations by race (Article 5, Section 45)
  - Creating a short-call substitute teacher pilot program (Article 5, Section 52)
  - Strengthening and expanding the Come Teach in Minnesota program to include Tier 2 eligibility (Article 5, Section 53)
  - Funding an alternative pathways support position within PELSB (Article 5, Section 67)

- **Improvements to K-12 Funding Adequacy & Equity.** We appreciate the work the committee did within the budget target to address long-standing cross-subsidies, and take initial steps to improve specific funding streams:
  - Increased funding for English learner programs and cross-subsidy reduction (Article 1, Section 8)
  - Ensuring MDE tracks and reports on progress toward eliminating paper forms for Free and Reduced Priced lunch (Article 1, Section 33)
  - Special education cross-subsidy reduction (Article 7, Section 15)
- **Access & Inclusion for Historically Underserved Students.** The bill also contains several key provisions that improve school climate and cultural relevance, while also expanding access to programming:
  - Requiring Ethnic Studies to be offered statewide (Article 2, Section 14)
  - Paying for AP exam fees for low-income students (Article 2, Section 61)
  - Strengthening provisions on American Indian Education (Article 4)

There are three areas that we are pleased to see major progress on and hope to see additional discussion and amendment before final passage:

- **Advancing Evidence-Based Literacy Practices.** Ensuring every student has the skills to read proficiently by 3rd grade has rightfully gotten significant attention this session, and we are pleased to see the a number of key provisions in the bill—such as training on evidence-based reading instruction for all K-3 educators, twice yearly screening for reading mastery and dyslexia, elimination of three-cueing from the definition of evidence-based, and partnership between MDE and CAREI. We would like to see stronger requirements attached to certain key provisions to ensure they are a “must” across the state.
- **Strengthening Compensatory Revenue.** This bill makes significant improvement to how Minnesota identifies students in need, allocates, and tracks compensatory revenue. We appreciate the House leadership in advancing policies to more equitably resource students experiencing poverty. We encourage language to ensure a larger percentage of funding is directed toward the schools serving the students that generate the funds, ideally moving up to at least 80 percent. (Line 17.8)
- **Use of Seclusion:** The current bill prohibits seclusion of children from birth through pre-K (Article 7, Section 9). According to the 2023 Restrictive Procedures Legislative Report, two thirds of seclusions in Minnesota are done to children ages 6-10, and as such we believe this ban should be expanded to 3rd grade.

Finally, there are some specific provisions that we urge the committee to modify before the bill advances:

- **Removing Pathways for Tier 2 Teachers to Enter and Advance in the Profession.** This bill proposes significant changes to tiered licensure, which was designed to enable aspiring educators from diverse backgrounds to enter and advance in the field without undue hurdles. We urge the committee to move forward with positive provisions that support educator growth and development without closing pathways that are not only valuable for school leaders seeking to recruit the most impactful educators and fill shortage areas, but that are also working to diversify the teacher workforce. Tiers 1 and 2 are currently far more

diverse than Tiers 3 and 4, and the legislature should simply not be taking actions that have the potential to undermine, demoralize, and push these candidates away from the profession by recreating cumbersome requirements. The bill has the potential to be a fully supportive, positive step forward by eliminating the following specific provisions:

- Repeal of the Tier 2 coursework pathways that recognize previous education and experience (Article 5, Section 30)
- Repeal of the experience pathway that allows teachers with evidence of multiple years of effectiveness in the classroom to advance to a more stable license (Article 5, Section 35)
- **Waiving Academic Goals.** We support efforts to innovate how the state approaches transparency and accountability, and also believe it is essential that all schools include measures of academic access and impact. We suggest the committee make a minor amendment to change the “may” to a “must” on line 105.11, ensuring that innovations are being measured against academic impact alongside other key goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for the effort you put into crafting this bill.

Sincerely,  
Matt Shaver  
Policy Director