

Testimony in Support of HF 3772

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Kent Pekel, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Rochester, Minnesota

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify in support of House File 3772, which would enable Rochester Public Schools and other partners here in our community to gradually assume financial support for an innovative program that is currently entirely funded by the State of Minnesota.

The Pathways in Technology Early College High School program, or PTECH, originated in New York more than a decade ago. The PTECH model spans all four years of high school and two years of higher education to enable students to earn both a high school diploma and a two-year postsecondary degree in a STEM field. Students also participate in a range of workplace experiences, including mentorship, worksite visits and paid internships.

All of that might sound like other career and technical education programs in Minnesota, and there certainly are similarities. However, the key difference with PTECH is that the courses PTECH students take in high school are explicitly designed to prepare them for success in postsecondary education in career pathways that are aligned with the workforce needs of the communities where they are located.

There are two career pathways in our PTECH program here in Rochester: nursing and information technology, two fields in which skilled workers are urgently needed not only in our community but across the state. Very importantly, in Rochester we have been deliberate in recruiting students from backgrounds that are underrepresented in both of those two fields into our PTECH program. For example, the 56 students in the first cohort of the program are now in 11th grade, and 56% of those students live in families with household incomes below \$50,000, 45% will be the first in their families to attend college, and 70% identify as students of color.

So why are we here asking for a change in legislation to support PTECH in Rochester? Our PTECH program was launched in 2021 with full funding from the State of Minnesota to enable us to bring the model to our state. The legislative appropriation for PTECH is \$791,000 per year, which currently covers the full cost of operating the program here in Rochester. HF 3772 would put in place a process that will enable our Rochester partnership to assume progressively more responsibility for funding PTECH in our community while making funds available to launch PTECH in other Minnesota communities with technical assistance from our team in Rochester. Decreasing state support for PTECH in Rochester in increments over the next several years is essential to preserving PTECH in Minnesota because, candidly, we do not have access to sufficient local funding to assume full responsibility for PTECH at this time.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the first cohort of our PTECH students in Rochester are now in 11th grade and they are from backgrounds that are key to Minnesota's future and they are preparing for success in career fields that offer strong wages and open the door to lives of opportunity. It would be shortsighted to end this promising program before those students enter higher education and before we can evaluate the effectiveness of the PTECH model here in Minnesota.