

HF 514 (Bakeberg)

HF 1052 (Bakeberg)

HF 1436 (Bakeberg)

Public Testimony Documents

COALITION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Autism Society of Minnesota • The Arc Minnesota • Decoding Dyslexia Minnesota • Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota • Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center • Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance • Minnesota Council on Disability Multicultural Autism Action Network • PACER Center • Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of Minnesota • Proof Alliance

Education Policy Committee

Minnesota House of Representatives

658 Cedar St. Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 4th, 2025

TO: Chair Bennett

CC: Vice Chair Mueller; Lead Jordan; Members of the Education Policy Committee

Dear Chair Bennett, Vice Chair Mueller, Lead Jordan, and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HF 514 (Bakeberg), HF 957 (Kresha), HF 1052 (Bakeberg), and HF 1436 (Bakeberg).

The Coalition for Children with Disabilities (CCD) believes discipline reform should focus on solutions that keep students engaged in learning, rather than policies that increase removals and deepen disparities.

The proposed changes to student discipline policies and school district mandates risk weakening critical protections—especially for students with disabilities and students of color, who already experience disproportionate exclusion from classrooms due to systemic inequities in discipline. Any reforms must be applied equitably and should not worsen existing disparities or restrict access to the supportive interventions that help students succeed—because every student, regardless of ability, deserves the opportunity to thrive in the classroom.

Minnesota-Specific Data Highlights the Urgency of This Issue:

- Students with disabilities make up 14% of the student population but account for 43% of all suspensions and expulsions (Minnesota Department of Human Rights, 2018).
- Black students, representing 12% of Minnesota's student population, receive 42% of all disciplinary actions (Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, 2022).
- Indigenous students, comprising 2% of the student body, account for 7% of disciplinary incidents (Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, 2022).

Policies that lower protections for young learners (HF 514) or allow school districts to opt out of compliance with essential student protections (HF 957) will not address the behavioral challenges schools face. Instead, they will worsen existing inequities and remove critical supports for the students who need them most. Similarly, expanding exclusionary discipline (HF 1052, HF 1436) without integrating research-based alternatives will push more students out of the classroom rather than addressing the root causes of behavioral dysregulation.

We urge the committee to reject these bills and instead advance policies that invest in proven, evidence-based strategies that promote student success, equity, and safe, inclusive learning environments.

Thank you,

The Coalition for Children with Disabilities

Sources:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights. (2018). *Suspension and expulsion disparities in Minnesota schools*. <https://mn.gov/mdhr/news-community/newsroom/suspensions.jsp>

Minnesota Education Equity Partnership. (2022). *Excluded: How discipline policies push students of color and students with disabilities out of school*. <https://www.mneep.org/publications/discipline-disparities-report>

March 3, 2025

Minnesota House Education Policy Committee

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

My name is Heather Prior and I live in Isanti, Minnesota. My child is in intermediate school and lives with an anxiety disorder that impacts her ability to learn, requiring 504 services. I am writing today with great concern regarding HF514 and HF1052 which would have detrimental impacts to children. Both bills work to repeal statute language that requires schools to work directly with families to have equitable learning opportunities (HF514) and sets limits on the use of recess detention as a form of discipline (HF1052). There has been a growing need for mental health supports within primary and intermediate level schools due to the increase in children diagnosed with mental health conditions as well as children engaging in behaviors that impact learning. Every child in the state of Minnesota deserves access to an education where they feel supported. Early intervention is essential, and it is crucial that school districts across Minnesota work to collaborate with families, mental health professionals, education specialists and other interested persons to develop learning and discipline plans that are tailored to the needs of the child. All behavior is a form of communication, it is the responsibility of the adults working with children to understand the second story and assist them with developing alternative skills that are consistent and culturally specific.

Repealing M.S. 121A.425 sends the message to families, and others caring for children who have been excluded, that their voice and concerns do not matter. We need to work towards creating an environment where school districts are required to provide our early learners (Preschool-5th) with the appropriate tools to be successful throughout their continuing education. I encourage the committee to ask if repealing this language is in the best interest of children, or that of the school district.

M.S. 121A.611 was brought forward in 2023 due to several parents/guardians across Minnesota expressing concerns that their child(ren) were being withheld from recess due to symptoms or behaviors of their diagnosis, not completing schoolwork or at the discretion of their teacher for discipline. Recess allows space for children to exert energy, establish social connections, develop interpersonal skills outside of classrooms and provide sensory output/vestibular stimulation. We encourage the use of positive behavior supports within schools; however withholding recess due to undesirable behavior is not teaching them anything. I want the committee to think about the real-life scenarios outlined below and ask yourself if you feel withholding recess is an appropriate intervention that will teach compliance and promote healthy learning:

1. Not moving a magnet into the "here" column for several days in a row
2. Delaying recess because the class was not transitioning from classes quickly and quietly (Art to Science, Science to Math etc.)
3. Schoolwork is not completed prior to the start of recess
4. Being disrespectful at lunch

When you work to find the second story, you would learn:

1. The child did not move the magnet to here because she just experienced a significant traumatic event outside of school and her amygdala continues to be hijacked. She is frozen, stuck and having a hard time processing the events and daily life around her.
2. The teacher provided an entire class with delayed recess/discipline due to the behavior of some, but not all, of the students. This caused frustration and confusion with the students who were compliant.
3. The child is having difficulty staying on task, is easily distracted by peers, and the family is on a waitlist for a Neuropsych evaluation to rule out ADHD. The waitlists for assessments and evaluations are long, which is not the fault of the child or family.
4. There was an argument between peers at lunch, the child in question became defensive when the lunchroom monitor told them they started the argument. Because the child became dysregulated, and raised their voice, they withheld recess. What the monitor did not know, is they became dysregulated because they have a difficult time speaking up to others, spent time role modeling with their parents and was communicating that it is not okay for this peer to spread rumors about them on social media.

You can see by the examples above that the use of recess detention, or delayed recess, is often abused. While school districts request autonomy over how to discipline students, it is important that this committee, and the Minnesota Department of Education, provide oversight to ensure we do not cause further trauma or developmental delays within schools. This statute helps hold school districts accountable and allows for all children to have recess. Recess is crucial to promoting the social, emotional and physical health of Minnesota's youngest learners.

I encourage the committee to reconsider repealing the above statutes and evaluate how school districts and families can get their needs met through data driven decision making and personal testimonies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Heather Prior

612-518-0111

My name is Ava Roots, and I attended public schools in Minnesota. I also work in the school system at Two Rivers High School and have family members who work with students in early childhood and elementary schools.

My first involvement with this bill was in 2023 when one of my friends from Northern Minnesota wrote to the Senate in support of banning suspensions for K-3 students. At her school, an elementary school student was suspended and then expelled, leaving their family with few choices of where to reenroll their child.

Although suspensions are largely talked about within the urban context, it is a statewide issue. Many of the students at the highest risk of discipline may also have few options for a safe place to be and supervision during the day. Black students are also disproportionately punished in schools accounting for 39% of state disciplinary infractions while only accounting for 10% of the population.

Children four to nine years old, the ages impacted by this policy, should be given resources that allow them to succeed, rather than removing them from school. Every day in school counts. My other family members who work in prekindergarten through elementary can attest to this. At this age, children are learning basic skills such as recognizing numbers and letters, reading, telling time, and basic math. Missing days of school because they are suspended might mean that a child falls behind on the critical skills needed to succeed in the rest of their school career. When my mother worked in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, a student missing three days could mean missing an entire unit. I strongly urge you to **vote against HF514** because suspending kindergarten through 3rd graders means disrupting their education when they are learning basic skills needed to succeed in life.

Thank you,
Ava Roots

March 4, 2025

To: Chair Bennet, and Members of the House Education Finance Committee RE: House File HF514

My name is Dr. Bernadeia Johnson. I am a member of the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition, an Associate Professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and the former superintendent of the MPS. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with creating exclusionary environments for our students in PK-3rd grades. I knew as superintendent, I had to tackle this persistent issue because students who are not in school **can not** learn, students who are pushed out of school lack a sense of **belonging**, and students who don't learn how to do school **cannot** develop **agency**. Therefore, I started with our little learners by putting a moratorium on suspending students in PreK-2nd grade for nonviolent behaviors.

Our state has such gaping discipline disparities—for students of color and students with disabilities. This happens when teaching **is not rigorous**, expectations **are unclear**, consequences **don't match** the behavior, and **consequences differ** based on the student demographic. How did I know this as a superintendent? My academic leadership team (ALT) and I reviewed suspensions for every student to identify trends and behaviors, allocate resources, and target professional development. This led to an investment in School-Based Mental Health models and a rewriting of the discipline policy to remove subjective categories, like the 3D's (Disrespect, Disorderly Conduct, and Defiance), all subject categories. I increased professional development **and resources, emphasizing keeping students in school so they could learn to read, write, and compute!**

I often share the example of a kindergarten student who kept putting on her lip gloss and distracting the teacher. The teacher asked her to put it away, but when she didn't, the teacher grabbed the lip gloss, and the student reacted, pushed her chair to the floor, and ran out of the classroom. The student was suspended for being unsafe, resulting in a loss of instructional time. Or the story of two middle school boys who broke items in the school. The Black boy was suspended for vandalism, and the White child was sent home with his mom with a stern talking to because it was learned that his parents were going through a divorce—exceptions for one boy and punishment for the other.

We must have **clear and consistent** expectations for our students, and more importantly, we must **not socialize** with our children and make them believe that school is not a place for them. And when we start suspending our littlest learners, we say school is not for you; you can't develop the skills to stay in school to learn. When our youngest learners are struggling and doing things that don't meet expectations, it's often because their **needs aren't being met**. We need to find ways to figure out what those unmet needs are – **it could be that sense of belonging, agency, or learning** – and how to meet them. We owe it to our youngest learners to

keep them in school and not send them that message from the earliest grades that school is not for them.

I Emphatically know that you can't learn if you ARE NOT in School. And I know that nothing will change if we don't also create an imperative that students should not be pushed out of school.

You have the power to make a common-sense change to keep our youngest learners in school, and I ask that you use it to benefit the children who will experience harm from these practices. Thank you for listening to and learning from my experiences.

Dr. Bernadeia H. Johnson,
Associate Professor, Minnesota State University, Mankato
Email: Bernadeia.johnson@mnsu.edu
Cell: (612) 760-3008

Minnesota House
Education Policy Committee
Chair: Rep. Bonnett
March 3, 2025

Re: HF 514 by Rep. Bakeberg – against it with every fiber in me

Dear Madam Chair and members, thanks for the opportunity to testify. My name is Idil Abdull, I am a Somali Autism Mom & trying to retire advocate.

I am hurt and confused by this bill. Why is the author wanting to kick children from school. These are babies that are six and seven years old. Any adult who does not know how to calm down and support a child in a school setting is at the wrong career.

The current House speaker often reminds us that you are all here to do work for Minnesotans. How can denying children to learn in school is the “work” for Minnesotans who chose you for this job. I am going to use political lingo as you are all politicians here and remind you that Minnesota is not a blue or red state, it is a Vikings purple state. This means the voters want you to work together and not keep repealing good laws that passed when you were in the minority as a knee jerk reaction.

Finally, we have all heard of the current hip words – fraud, waste and abuse. Fraud is billing for services that were not rendered, if so then when a school district bills for a child they did not serve – wouldn’t that be fraud. Schools should NOT be paid for when the student is not at school and not being serviced. You see, you all must be fair and call it from the hip.

When my son was suspended from a lobbyist protected principal Jaysen Anderson and union protected Kelly Morris on Thursday, May 3rd, 2018, I was traumatized. You are all traumatizing me and so many other families with this hurtful, wrong, and heartbreaking bill. I hope it never passes, and it is dead on arrival.

Thanks for your time.

Idil Abdull – Somali Autism Mom

My name is Shae Ross. I am 19 years old. I am a student at The University of Minnesota. I am an activist. A writer. A daughter. I am a product of the public education system. I am also fiercely concerned for the wellbeing of elementary age children.

I have only ever worked one kind of job—from early high school until after I graduated, and even still—I worked as a school support staff. My senior year of high school, I would set my alarms for 6:00 am, quickly drive over to the local elementary school, stay as a lead until the students were dismissed for school, at which point I would drive to *my* school. Once my school day was over, I was back at Westwood Elementary, ready to greet the horde of children I had sent off that morning.

During the summers, I worked 40 hour weeks, sometimes more. I took groups of 15 or so children, sometimes alone, through Twin's games and public parks. I was greeted at home by the crooked smile of my 7 year old brother.

When I got to college, I enrolled in elementary education classes, eager to deepen my understanding of pedagogy and good practice when it came to childcare. I wanted what was best for these kids. I wanted to commit my life to that.

There are many lessons I've taken from my years of work and learning about the field of education—my many late night discussions with teachers and teacher educators—the love I have for the troublemakers in my family and my life. Most important, to me, is the understanding that ignoring, excluding, shaming or *disposing* of children does not combat *trouble*. It produces it, engenders it, and makes spectacle of it.

We know, statistically, that disabled children and Black/Brown children are disproportionately impacted by school disciplinary measures like suspensions. Teacher educator at Columbia, Dr. Bettina Love, insists this structural racism/ableism takes children who are different, excludes them, ignores them, silences them, and then loudly chastises them for any pushback. Kicking children out of the classroom does not maintain a culture of education—it is a *threat* that sits looming over *every* student—speak up, act out, be different, and you will be *removed*.

When it comes to young children, ages 5-9, we must think critically about what a suspension means. These are people, young people, who are not yet old enough to find jobs or determine life paths for themselves. They are, for the first time, developing a sense of self, in a world that is often dark and hostile to self-exploration. They are people, yes, but so too are they products of their circumstances. The longer we exclude and punish children, *different* children, the longer we will watch little kids slip through the cracks, skipping class, with teachers that refuse to engage with them. Kids who act out, yell, cuss—who are poor, disabled, Black, undocumented. Kids who need somebody hoping for them.

The things that children need are, in truth, the same things anybody needs. Community, care, and hope. Kindness. Gentleness. Forgiveness. The removal of suspensions ensures that children, even behaviorally challenged children, have the *chance* to be in a school environment, with peers, with hopes, and with adults that have their best interest in mind. Suspensions are momentary relief for staff that are eager to *give up hoping*. It is imperative for the children—who should always be our first priority in education—that they not be shunned before they can tie their shoes.

March 4, 2025
Written Testimony
HF514

Hello, Committee Chair Bennet and Committee members,
My name is Sumeya, and I am a concerned community member here to express my strong opposition to HF514. This bill poses a serious threat to students of color and students with disabilities, who are already disproportionately disciplined in our schools. Instead of fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments, policies like HF514 perpetuate systemic inequities and push the most vulnerable students out of classrooms and into the criminal justice system.

The data speaks for itself. During the 2015-2016 academic year, Indigenous students in Minnesota were ten times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers. Black students faced similar disparities, being eight times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students. Additionally, students with disabilities were twice as likely to experience suspension or expulsion compared to their non-disabled peers.

The pattern continued in the 2017-2018 academic year when approximately 33,409 students were suspended in Minnesota. Despite making up only 9% of the student population, Black or African American students accounted for 36% of all suspensions. This data highlights the racial disparities embedded in school discipline practices, revealing how Black, Indigenous, and disabled students are unfairly targeted.

The consequences of these disparities are severe and long-lasting. Research has consistently linked school suspensions to future involvement in the criminal justice system. As Wolf & Kupchik (2016) state, “Being suspended increases the likelihood that a student will experience criminal victimization, criminal involvement, and incarceration years later, as adults.” This “school-to-prison pipeline” is not just a theoretical issue—it is a reality that disproportionately harms marginalized students, limiting their educational opportunities and future success.

Rather than implementing policies that increase exclusionary discipline, our schools should focus on restorative justice practices, mental health resources, and equitable disciplinary measures that address the root causes of behavioral issues. HF514 takes us in the wrong direction, reinforcing harmful practices that have already failed our most vulnerable students.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose HF514 and instead support initiatives that promote fairness, inclusion, and long-term student success. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your time, Sumeya

2025
HF 1052

Dear Chair Bennet & Education Policy Committee Members,

First, thank you all so much for your years of service to Minnesota. It is so greatly appreciated!

My name is Kate Quale. I am a former member of the Governor's Council for Developmental Disabilities, Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Education MDE, DHS Medicaid Services Advisory Committee & MDE Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Recruitment & Retention Workgroup and I am a former educator I am also the mom of an amazing autistic 11 year old.

I am writing to you as a former educator & education administrator and mom of an autistic-ADHD child to ask you all to not support the bill HF 1052 which would allow schools to seclude and withhold recess from students as punishment.

As a former educator assistant, I saw first-hand how withholding recess did not work. It led to more inattentive, disruptive behaviors in class, lower test scores, unhappier kids - and unhappier teachers/paras. It meant less time actually teaching, and more time doing classroom management. It also resulted in teacher burnout, as teachers and teacher assistants could not take the much needed lunch break or bathroom break. It meant eating lunch in the classroom while students completed their assignment or some task assigned as punishment.

When teachers seclude or punish by not allowing a student outside to recess, the student feels punished and singled out. This is especially exacerbated when holding in the whole class from recess for the 1 or 2 students who were taking extra time on an assignment. Even if those students were extra chatty or if they were struggling to understand the assignment, if it's an ongoing issue the students need learning support. Often "disruptive" students struggling to pay attention or complete a task, have undiagnosed learning disabilities like dyslexia or dyspraxia or ADHD or Autism or simply maybe just need a little extra time to learn the concept.

Withholding recess or using seclusion methods fuels bullying within the school environment. Bullying does not foster learning. It does not build respect between student & teacher. It does not teach our Minnesota kids to grow up to be resilient, creative, considerate, assertive, critical thinkers needed in our workforce or community. When the whole class is held from recess, because 1 or 2 children are "two slow", the class begins to bully those children behind the teacher's back. It starts with sighs, eye rolls, then name-calling ("R-word" which is incredibly ableist and harmful), then ostracization, the child is uninvited from birthday parties, the child is called last in Gym or not included in team sports, whispers in the halls. Being repeatedly singled out as a child can create mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, leading to school refusal.

Over time the students who are repeatedly withheld from recess or forced into seclusion & bullied or ostracized from their peers have been shown by American Academy of Pediatrics, NAMI and Bullying.gov and many more organizations, to lead to lower test scores, lower graduation rates, and higher suicide rates. Possibly some leading to even the horrific gun violence we have seen across the country.

This can all be remedied by first allowing all students the monitored recess breaks they so need for their bodies and minds. It helps them focus better and engage in classroom learning. And second, instead of punishing students who are struggling, provide students with support. Find the source of the issue. Create a welcoming learning environment built on respect.

Thank you for your time & reflecting on my experience with seclusion & withholding recess as punishment. Please do not support any bill or amendments to a bill that would bring back harmful tactics. There are better ways to manage the classroom & work with students struggling. this very important legislative bill that has a huge positive ripple effect on so many levels. Thank you so much again for all you do. It is so greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Kate Quale



March 1, 2024

House Education Policy Committee

Subject: Letter of Concern Regarding HF514

Dear Chair Bennett and Education Policy Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of the Multicultural Autism Action Network to express concern about HF514 which would repeal the ban on disciplinary dismissals for children in grades K-3. We strongly oppose this bill for the following reasons:

Suspension disproportionately affects students of color.

The Minnesota Suspensions and Expulsion Report ¹ shows that

- Indigenous students were 10 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students.
- Black students were 8 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students.
- Students with disabilities were 2 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than students without disabilities.

Discriminatory practices that we know disproportionately affect students of color, students with disabilities and especially students who are multiply marginalized have no place in our schools.

Being suspended increases the likelihood of involvement in the carceral system as adults. ² A study by Wolf and Kupchick found that “being suspended increases the likelihood that a student will experience criminal victimization, criminal involvement, and incarceration years later, as adults.”

Suspensions do not improve behavior. A study from Partington found that “Alternative strategies to suspension might be more effective for the target students as suspension did little to improve behaviour or performance.” ³

Suspensions are not a deterrent and may in fact exacerbate behavior problems. A study by LiCalsi, Osher and Bailey found that “more severe exclusionary discipline does not serve as a deterrent to students’ future reported behavior, and for younger students it may instead exacerbate it. In addition, more severe exclusionary discipline has a consistent negative effect on many other

¹ https://mn.gov/mdhr/assets/Suspensions%20and%20Expulsions%20Report_tcm1061-529594.pdf

² Wolf, K. C., & Kupchik, A. (2016). School Suspensions and Adverse Experiences in Adulthood. *Justice Quarterly*, 34(3), 407–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2016.1168475>

³ Partington, G. (2001). Student Suspensions: The Influence on Students and Their Parents. *Australian Journal of Education*, 45(3), 323-340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410104500309>.

long-term educational outcomes for students. Receiving a more severe exclusionary disciplinary response to an incident increases the number of days students miss due to absence during subsequent school years, increases the number of days they miss due to suspension in subsequent school years, decreases their likelihood of earning both English language arts (ELA) and math credits throughout their high school career, and decreases their likelihood of graduating. The severity of exclusionary disciplinary response has no effect on the behavior, academic outcomes, or attendance of peers in the same grade within the disciplined student's school, nor does it have effects on students' or teachers' perceptions of school climate.⁴

Suspensions have a negative effect on attendance, course completion, and test scores. A study from Chu and Ready concluded that "...the negative relationships between suspension and outcomes persist. Specifically, we found that suspended students had weaker attendance, course completion rates, and standardized test scores; were more likely to drop out; and were less likely to graduate within 4, 5, or 6 years."⁵

A single in school suspension is a predictor of future failure. A study from Smith, Blake, et al concluded "that a single in-school suspension is predictive of significant risk for academic failure (greater than 25% chance of failure) on a state-wide standardized test controlling for a host of individual and school characteristics. We also find that this relationship between discipline and risk for standardized test failure is more pronounced for students of color. The implications for school psychologists in terms of curtailing the potential negative impact of in-school suspension on student achievement are discussed."⁶

The evidence that suspensions cause harm for our youngest learners is insurmountable. The evidence that suspensions improve behavior in any way simply does not exist. No one benefits from continuing to use tools that simply do not work, and instead cause long-lasting harm to students. We therefore respectfully ask you to prioritize the needs of K-3 students and vote against this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Multicultural Autism Action Network
Fatima Molas
Delia Samuel
Rufo Jiru
Maren Christenon Hofer

⁴ LiCalsi, Christina, David Osher, and Paul Bailey. "An empirical examination of the effects of suspension and suspension severity on behavioral and academic outcomes." *American Institutes for Research* 8 (2021).
<https://www.cmhnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/NYC-Suspension-Effects-Behavioral-Academic-Outcomes-August-2021.pdf>

⁵ Elizabeth M. Chu and Douglas D. Ready. [Exclusion and Urban Public High Schools: Short- and Long-Term Consequences of School Suspensions](#). American Journal of Education 2018 124:4, 479-509

⁶ Smith, D., Ortiz, N.A., Blake, J.J. et al. Tipping Point: Effect of the Number of In-school Suspensions on Academic Failure. *Contemp School Psychol* 25, 466–475 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-020-00289-7>

March 4, 2025
Testimony for HF514

Hello Committee Chair Bennet, and Committee members.

My name is Gabriel and I am a community member/advocate. I am opposed to HF514 because why are we moving backwards ? Why don't we share the same care we got for our children with others? Why should we impede on the early development of our children? There's a bunch of why's and I believe yall know WHY. Repealing this ban does not address the root causes of behavioral issues with children but rather a punitive dismissal. This is not fair to the families as suspension places a burden on their lives, as parents may need to take time off work or even find their child alternative childcare arrangements. It's just crazy to me hearing a child in kindergarten who is not emotionally, mentally, socially developed yet is getting punished. I really ask for y'all to reconsider this as you think about your own nephew, niece, grandchild.

Thank you peace and Love.

March 4, 2025
Testimony
HF514

Hello Committee Administrator Withers, and Committee members. My name is Hanna Schmitt (she/her) and I am a current Master of Social Work student at the UMN, a graduate of ISD 196 in 2018, and a former Educational Assistant for an Elementary School in ISD 191 in Minnesota.

I am submitting a Written Testimony for HF514 as a concerned community member. From my experiences, I know from first-hand experience that Minnesota's approach to school discipline simply isn't working, with too many students being pushed out via suspensions and expulsions rather than supported to help students develop the skills they need for long-term success. Rather than educators working towards connecting with students and fostering trusting relationships, many times overworked educators in Minnesota tend to push off and out students rather than bringing them in to help foster relationship-building skills and behaviors.

In 2023, after years of debate, this body placed limits on when and how suspensions may be used, specifically prohibiting suspensions of a full day or more for students in grades K-3, except in cases where there is a serious ongoing threat. This important, student-centered decision has called on schools to implement alternatives better aligned with students' developmental needs. Moreover, it is a prudent policy that gives school leaders enough flexibility to send a student home for a partial day, but requiring them to reintegrate the student in cases where there is no ongoing threat.

I am dismayed that SF1022/HF514 would take us backwards on important work that is already being implemented over the past year. I am dismayed that SF1022/HF514 would continue to have educators push out students from their budding relationships and keep students from developing the skills they need for long-term success.

Students need to be in class to learn and develop social-emotional skills. These young grades are also a critical time for literacy because reading by the end of 3rd grade has a huge impact on a student's life and later academic achievement. Suspensions and expulsions are not the right approach for our youngest learners. Suspensions in the early grades can have long-term consequences for students—impacting engagement, attendance, graduation, and life trajectories. Keeping kids in class so they can learn and grow is all we Educators, Parents, and Minnesotans want, and I hope you reject this detrimental legislation and protect our young learners.

Moving forward, we in Minnesota should continue to allocate resources that allow school administrators and educators to implement evidence-based practices that keep students where they should be: in the classroom.

Sincerely,
Hanna

March 2, 2025

RE: HF514

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to oppose HF514 (and also SF1022), which if passed would reinstate suspensions for students in grades K-3. I wish I could be at the March 4 hearing in person, but I have to work. Here instead is my written testimony.

As the parent of a second-grader in public school, I firmly believe that students need **support**, not punishment in any form, including suspension.

As someone committed to equity, I know that suspensions disproportionately affect students from marginalized communities, especially students of color and students with disabilities. These kids need **support**, not punishment.

Banning suspensions for young students takes an unacceptable response off the table and encourages schools to find ways to meet their students' unmet needs rather than punishing them for "behavior." These students are communicating that they need something their school environment is not providing.

Thank you,

Jessica Clifton
473 S Howell St, Apt B
St Paul, MN 55105

651-398-0828

jessica.louise.cliton@gmail.com

Greene Testimony on HF514

Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Betty Greene. I am a community member and former school psychologist. I am writing in opposition to HF514.

HF514 rolls back critical protections for some of Minnesota's youngest learners. For years, Minnesota's approach to school discipline simply wasn't working, with too many students being pushed out rather than supported to develop the skills they need for long-term success. That's why, in 2023, the Minnesota legislature passed a common-sense policy to ban suspensions for K-3 students. Not only did these suspensions have a disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities—they also didn't work, bringing long-term negative consequences, including lower student academic outcomes and graduation rates.

Allowing these dismissals would perpetuate harmful disciplinary practices rather than supporting children's learning and development. Administrators and teachers often utilize suspensions out of convenience, sometimes unknowingly out of hidden bias. Children need to be in school so they can learn. They don't learn how to manage their behaviors, nor do they learn academics, if they are pushed out. Suspensions at a young age are predictive of later dropout from school.

I ask you to reject HF514 and uphold Minnesota's commitment to developmentally appropriate and inclusive education policies. We need to support approaches that help all children thrive, not policies that exclude and punish them for behaviors they are still learning to manage. These early years are especially essential to literacy.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Greensky Testimony on HF514

Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Amber Greensky. I am a community member and am active on several parent advisory boards for Duluth Public Schools. I am writing in opposition to HF514.

HF514 rolls back critical protections for some of Minnesota's youngest learners. For years, Minnesota's approach to school discipline was not working, with too many students being pushed out rather than supported to develop the skills they need for long-term success. That's why, in 2023, the Minnesota legislature passed a common-sense policy to ban suspensions for K-3 students. Not only did these suspensions have a disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities—they also didn't work, bringing long-term negative consequences, including lower student academic outcomes and graduation rates.

Allowing these dismissals would perpetuate harmful disciplinary practices rather than supporting children's learning and development. Administrators and teachers often utilize suspensions out of convenience, sometimes unknowingly out of hidden bias. Our children recognize when they are not welcome in our schools and classrooms. Suspensions at a young age are predictive of later dropout from school. Children need to be in school so they can learn. They don't learn how to manage their behaviors, nor do they learn academics, if they are pushed out. Suspensions of some of our youngest learners is not an appropriate way to manage classroom size and will likely have a negative impact on average daily membership (ADM), which is the count used to apportion funding for schools.

I ask you to reject HF514 and uphold Minnesota's commitment to developmentally appropriate and inclusive education policies. We need to support approaches that help all children thrive, not policies that exclude and punish them for behaviors they are still learning to manage. These early years are especially essential to literacy.

Thank you for considering my testimony.



March 1, 2024

House Education Policy Committee

Subject: Letter of Concern Regarding HF1052

Dear Chair Bennett and Education Policy Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of the Multicultural Autism Action Network to express concern about HF 1052. There are several parts of this bill which are troubling, but we would like to specifically address the section which repeals recently passed legislation addressing the practice of withholding recess as a form of punishment.

When we came before this committee in 2022 and again in 2023, there was nearly unanimous agreement that withholding recess is not in the best interest of children. What has changed since then?

When the bill was passed, we showed evidence, heard testimony, and committee members agreed that withholding recess from children does not result in improved behavior. In fact, it often has the opposite effect by removing the opportunity for children to move their bodies, connect with peers, socialize, and provide a necessary break from academic work during the day.

Numerous studies^{1 2 3 4} show that breaks, access to movement, and unstructured social time are absolutely essential to child development. We therefore ask you once again to prioritize the needs of students over the wants of adults and say no to this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Multicultural Autism Action Network
Fatima Molas
Delia Samuel
Rufo Jiru
Maren Christenon Hofer

¹ <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2010/02/the-state-of-play.html>

² <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/SIRRecess2.pdf>

³ <https://iinkproject.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Rhea-Instructional-Leader-Journal-2016-pub-Recess-LiiNK.pdf>

⁴ <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/131/1/183/30893/The-Crucial-Role-of-Recess-in-School?autologincheck=redirected> <https://educationandbehavior.com/american-academy-pediatrics-explains-recess-crucial-children-shouldnt-withheld/> <https://usplaycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Need-for-Recess-2019-FINAL-for-web.pdf> <https://www.nasn.org/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/po-sition-statements/ps-recess>



**Minnesota Elementary School
Principals' Association**



MASSP
Minnesota Association of
Secondary School Principals

Rep. Ben Bakeberg
House of Representatives
2nd Floor Centennial Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

HF 1052 (SF 2066)

Dear Representative Bakeberg:

On behalf of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) and the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), we write to express our support for House File 1052 (SF 2066), which allows up to three days of suspension for students in kindergarten through third grade when necessary.

As school leaders, we are deeply committed to fostering safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students. We recognize the importance of developmental appropriateness in discipline policies and the need for proactive, restorative approaches. However, there are circumstances where school administrators and teachers require the discretion to implement short-term removals, including but not limited to suspensions, to maintain a safe school environment for students and staff.

This bill provides a balanced approach, ensuring that students receive the necessary support while allowing school leaders the flexibility to address severe behavioral incidents that compromise safety and disrupt learning. By maintaining the option for up to three days of suspension when other interventions are not sufficient, we can better support the well-being of all students and staff while continuing to prioritize social-emotional learning and restorative practices. Removing mandates ensures that administrators can use sound judgment in student discipline.

We appreciate your leadership in recognizing the challenges schools face and look forward to collaborating on effective strategies for Minnesota students. Please feel free to reach out if we can provide further input.

Sincerely,

Michelle Krell, Executive Director
Minnesota Elementary School
Principals' Association (MESPA)

Bob Driver, Executive Director
Minnesota Association of
Secondary School Principals (MASSP)



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

2 Pine Tree Drive, Suite 380, Arden Hills, MN 55112 • 612-430-7750 • www.amsd.org

March 3, 2025

Rep. Ben Bakeberg
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Rep. Bakeberg,

Thank you for sponsoring HF 1052, legislation that would allow limited flexibility in determining discipline for students in Kindergarten through Grade 3. Allowing for some local control will help ensure safe and effective learning environments for all students and staff.

AMS D members believe discipline policies must strive to eliminate disparities based on race or disability and should always prioritize restorative practices and interventions. At the same time, there are circumstances in which temporary removal from the classroom setting is necessary to maintain the safety of students and staff. HF 1052 acknowledges that in rare but serious cases, a short-term suspension can serve as a tool to address severe behavioral issues while schools work to provide appropriate support and interventions, and a safe re-entry plan.

Educators and administrators are dedicated to fostering positive learning experiences for every child. This bill will allow educators to address challenging situations effectively while maintaining a commitment to success for all students.

Thank you for your work on this important issue, and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Scott Croonquist
Executive Director



March 1, 2024

House Education Policy Committee

Subject: Letter of Concern Regarding HF1436

Dear Chair Bennett and Education Policy Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of the Multicultural Autism Action Network to express concern about HF 1426. There are several parts of this bill which are concerning.

We are concerned about changing the words “serious ongoing safety threat” to “safety threat.” Is a child with a mobility impairment who is danger of falling down a safety threat? Is a child refusing to comply with a request a safety threat? How about a child with Tourette’s syndrome who blurts out unexpected phrases? We have seen how, without clear definition, lowering the bar for what constitutes a safety threat often leads to disproportionate use of disciplinary procedures on students of color, students with disabilities, and especially those students who are multiply marginalized.

Further, we are concerned by the desire to delete the requirement to attempt to use nonexclusionary disciplinary policies and practices in Section 2, subdivision 1 and section 3.a. In all of conversations with schools and administrators, there has been near unanimous agreement that non-exclusionary discipline should be prioritized and exclusionary practices that are known to cause harm should be used only when all other options have been exhausted.

We are further concerned about the deletion of the full and participation in early learning and recess and other breaks in Section 4. Non-exclusionary discipline and the right to recess have been shown to improve student outcomes. Removing those provisions prioritizes the wants adults over the needs of children, and are not the right choice for our schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

Multicultural Autism Action Network
Fatima Molas
Delia Samuel
Rufo Jiru
Maren Christenon Hofer



March 3, 2025

RE: Recess for All - Minnesota HF 1052, the bill to repeal the recess law

Dear Chairwoman Bennet and Education Policy Members,

I am writing to strongly encourage you to reconsider removing the protections for recess when this bill goes forward. By way of introduction, I have worked with schools and studied recess for over 18 years, and I am a founding member of the Global Recess Alliance. I am the co-author of the American Academy of Pediatrics Policy on Recess <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/131/1/183/30893/The-Crucial-Role-of-Recess-in-School>

In the AAP Policy Statement, we provide the evidence that recess promotes the social, emotional, cognitive and physical health of children. In it, we state, unequivocally that "On the basis of an abundance of scientific studies, withholding recess for punitive or academic reasons would seem to be counterproductive to the intended outcomes and may have unintended consequences in relation to a child's acquisition of important life skills."

You might also recall the January 23, 2023 testimony of student, Simon Hofer, then a 5th-grader: when kids miss recess, they are stressed out. In Simon's words, he "didn't feel sorry, I felt depressed." Feeling stressed/anxious or depressed are not the ideal state of mind for learning. Refreshed, renewed and happy, as most kids feel after recess, are.

In preserving the Recess for All law that prohibits using recess as currency to "incentivize" behavior, or revoking it for students to "do more," you are making a commitment to students. Recess is not a reward or a privilege. It is fundamental for children's wellbeing. Preserving all the precious minutes for recess **for all kids** makes learning and teaching and being at school better (students are less stressed, they are less fidgety and better able to pay attention and tackle challenging work—all important for learning and remembering). Maintaining recess for all students ensures they are not only rigorously challenged in their schooling, they are also given times to just be kids—to elevate the joy of schooling, and be prepared to successfully meet the demands of learning in the classroom.

Feel free to contact me directly for resources or to discuss recess policy, logistics and implementation further: DrR@SuccessfulHealthyChildren.org, 513-515-8402.

PJLD,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine L. Ramstetter".

Catherine L. Ramstetter, PhD,
School Health Consultant, Successful Healthy Children
513-515-8402

DrR@SuccessfulHealthyChildren.org
www.SuccessfulHealthyChildren.org
www.GlobalRecessAlliance.org

PJLD—for my brother (Peter James Louis Deitschel) to remind us all to follow his example and Practice Joyful Living Daily

March 3, 2025

Dear Members of the Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota strongly opposes HF 1052 and HF 1436, which rolls back non-exclusionary and supportive discipline reforms and allows students in pre-school to grade 3 to be suspended.

Suspending students in pre-school through grade 3 is harmful and counterproductive to a student's growth and is not effective in changing future behavior. The Brookings Institute found that suspending students is associated with negative impacts such as reduced instructional time, lower achievement, and increased school dropout. The Department of Education's data show that BIPOC students and special education students are suspended disproportionately to White students and students in general education.

Suspension of young students assumes that students have the ability and skills to meet the expectations of the school. Using non-exclusionary discipline connects the student to services and support to teach them skills and address any underlying issues such as the need for mental health services or special education.

A 2022 report from the Minnesota Department of Education found that the most successful schools in the state adopted a responsive and structured approach to students struggling instead of suspensions. First, these schools scan the student for academic struggles, absenteeism, or behavioral concerns. Then they select the best intervention such as academic support, social-emotional learning, or family outreach. Finally, these schools assign an appropriate staff member to intervene, be it a social worker or a trusted teacher. HF 2497 was passed in 2023 in part to ensure that non-exclusionary discipline measures are used for our youngest learners in Minnesota so that we are addressing the "why" and not just disciplining them.

That legislation also encouraged schools to not withhold recess or delay meals as a form of disciplinary action. These bills would delete that recommendation. The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated explicitly that recess is essential for physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Students who have access to recess have decreased anxiety, more self-regulation, and opportunities for social learning and relationship building. Restricting meals negatively impacts children's behavior and learning, especially for students from low-income households.

We urge the committee to oppose HF 1052 and HF 1436 and instead continue to protect Minnesota's youngest and most vulnerable students by supporting far more effective, non-exclusionary policies that prioritize student well-being.

Respectfully,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Bryce Premo, MSW Candidate
Policy Intern

Open Letter - Do Not Repeal the K-3 Dismissal Ban

Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, Speaker Demuth, and Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

Today we as community members, colleagues, and organizations join alongside the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition to express our concerns over the attempt to repeal the Kindergarten through third grade dismissal ban in Minnesota. ([SF1022](#) and [HF514](#))

In 2023, legislators took important steps to end the school-to-prison pipeline, creating age-appropriate limits on exclusionary discipline in order to keep our youngest learners in school. For years, Minnesota's approach to school discipline simply wasn't working, with too many students being pushed out rather than supported to develop the skills they need for long-term success.

Before 2023, not only did K-3rd grade dismissals have a disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities, but they also brought long-term negative consequences, including decreased student outcomes, graduation rates, and poor school climate.

In a 2018 study from the American Journal on Education, suspended students had weaker attendance, course completion rates, standardized test scores, were more likely to drop out, and were less likely to graduate within 4, 5, or 6 years. Furthermore, we can see the disproportionate impact plainly in the Minnesota 2022 Expulsions and Suspensions Report:

- From 2018-2019, students with disabilities **made up 14%** of the student body, yet they experienced **almost 60% of all discipline** issued by school staff for subjective student behavior
- From 2018-2019, Black, Indigenous, and other students of color made up a **little less than half** of the student body, yet they **made up almost 80% of discipline** issued by school staff for subjective student behavior.

We need to make sure our youngest and most vulnerable students have a chance for growth and learning.

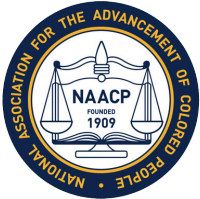
To implement this law, districts have been working over the last two years to develop and implement non-exclusionary alternatives to dismissals, which moves the state toward better outcomes for all students. We should not repeal what has barely had a chance to work and be implemented. If districts, schools, and educators need additional support to keep children in school, we should be resourcing them and developing creative solutions. The solution is not to go backwards.

We urge you to give our children a chance, and keep in place the K-3 dismissal ban.

Thank you for your consideration.

Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition





NAACP



UNTIL
WE ARE ALL
FREE



Erin Sandsmark
(Executive Director)
Solutions Not Suspensions
Margaret Sullivan
ED Allies
David Dively
(Executive Director)
MN Council on Disability
Ceema Samimi
(Professor of Social Work)
University of Minnesota
Tina Rucci
The Arc MN
Heather Anderson
(Executive Director)
Advancing Equity
Coalition
Khulia Pringle
S.T.A.N.D UP MN Parents
United
Jess Webster
Mid MN Legal Aid
Julia Freeman
Voices for Racial Justice
Megan Baker
Kelli Joy Care Services,
LLC
Maren Christenson Hofer
(Executive Director)
Multicultural Autism
Action Network (MAAN)
Navin Solórzano O'Brien
Educators For Excellence
Fadumo Hassan
Twin Cities Parent
Connection
Ms. Jennifer Bluhm
(Concerned Parents of
Disabled Children)
Jen Westmoreland
(School Board Director)
Hopkins Public Schools
Darneisha jones

Urban League
Rahannah Johnrain
Carley O'Connor
Kelis Houston
Village Arms
Tonia Lofton
Michael Tate
NorthSide Bulldogs
Joanne Hodgeman
Black Parent Advisory
Council
Elleni B Fellows
(Parent)
Pamela Isham
Sandra J Reishus
(Teacher Shakopee Public
Schools)
Rhia Bornmann Spears
Spears Family Law PLLC
Nicole Freeman
(Social Worker)
Minneapolis NAACP
Child Protection
Committee
DeClara Tripp
NAACP
Samantha Gervais
(Parent & Teacher)
Sara K. Wagner
(Social Worker)
Alyssa Gilbertson
Curious Roots PLLC;
Cultivate Counseling and
Wellness
Jennifer Mortenson
(Paraprofessional/PCA)
Becky Langason
Fiona Pradhan
Faith Dietz
(Community Member)
Megan Keyser
Jamal Dyar
(Parent)

Satara Strong-Allen
(Executive Director)
Love First Community
Engagement
Helen Schwie
(Mother)
Anna Syverson
(Psychiatric Associate)
Katie Webber
Emily Lauer
Michelle Law-Pink
(Early Childhood
Educator/Parent)
Shabnaz Benitez
Deborah Grillo
Tessa
(Parent)
Krista Schweppe
Claire Warren
Kate Quale
(Former Member of MN
Governors Council on
Developmental Disabilities)
Anya Helgeson
Jessica Strobes
(Owner)
Jessica Strobel
Photography
Jenna Forcey
(Parent)
Amy Wish
Angela Powers
(Nurse)
Arielle MacDonald
(Parent)
Song Vang
(Social Worker)
Shana Dobie
(Director)
A.N.E.W. Path LLC
Fiona Furlong
Alyssa Norenberg
(Occupational Therapist)

Carol Markham-Cousins
(Restorative Practices
Consultant)
Carol A Amundson
(Parent)
Carolyn Szczepanski
Elizabeth McLister
(Nurse)
Chrisandra LaSalle
Mary Dyl
Rachel Peterson
Maerin Renee
(Nurse)
Erin Merrill
Nekima Levy Armstrong
(Founder)
Racial Justice Network
Laura Jean
PACER Center
Cherylyne Vaz
(Mother)
Rachel Droogsma
Malaika Eban
Legal Rights Center
Sam Bauman
Megan Cahill
(Teacher)
Dina Carpenter
Katie Bentley
Erin McLaughlin Peterson
Angela Braun
Jenn
Steven Schaus
Antenisha Griggs
Ashley Kodet
Tess Erickson
Brianka Agboola
(School Nurse)
Kathy Hoene
Jamie Martens
Jenzi Silverman
Kristen T Hutchinson
(Mother of kids with ADHD
& ASD)
Cindy Carlson

Elise Gi-Ae Gooi
(Parent & Psychotherapist)
Christina Coy
Maija McKeown
Rev. Kate Taber
(Clergy & Parent)
Nitasha McConnell
Rebecca Dryden
Susie Petteway
(Social Worker & Parent)
Brie Eisenbarth
(Special Education Teacher)
Kelly Agosto
Theresa McNamara
Teresa Howard
Caroline Miesle
(Educator)
Great River School
Charlie Tirey
Jan Dickinson
Ellen Cummins
Chauntyll Allen
(**School Board Director**)
St. Paul public schools
Shoreé Ingram
(Executive Director)
Voices for Racial Justice
Johanna Erickson
(Therapist)
Ellie Mental Health
Tiffany Lee
Alyssa Peterson
Melisa Wright
Amy Steigman
Sarah Beam
Shanelle Hall
(Founder/CEO)
**Women of Color in
Leadership**
Kathryn Letourneau
Kahlee Griffey
(Co-Executive Director)
Until We Are All Free
Ava Roots

(UMN Student & School
Employee)
Grace Haupt
Sophia Runyan
(UMN Student)
Katrina Jensen
(UMN Student)
Rowan Lange
Marc Hill
Neo Groenewold
Katya Hickey
Adrian Forbs
(UMN Student)
Riley Ferguson
(UMN Student)
Laichia Vang
(UMN Student)
Adella Mulawarman
(UMN Student)
Juliet Murphy
(UMN Student)
Jessica Schoner
(Parent)
Melissa Lynne Blum
Freyja Wolfe

House Education Policy Committee

Chair Representative Peggy Bennett

March 3rd, 2025

Opposing H.F. 0514 Permitting K-3 Exclusionary Discipline

Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Council on Disability opposes the passage of H.F. 514, which would reverse the progress made previously in our educational system. It required schools to consider non-exclusionary discipline practices for the youngest of our learners. Students at this age, even as early as Kindergarten, should not have recess withheld for any disciplinary reason as it improves physical and mental health, academic success, in addition to supporting the practice of staying active throughout life.


Students with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing discipline in their school (**over-represented significantly at 14% of the population but nearly 60% of the disciplinary actions**) that prevents their participation in recess with their peers, reduces attendance, are more likely to drop out, and reduced graduation rates. We cannot accept reforms that will negatively affect our students with disabilities who already urgently need our support.

Additionally, we joined our partners at *Solutions Not Suspensions* in signing their open letter which was previously sent to this committee as well.

The Minnesota Council on Disability believes in protecting students with disabilities from inappropriate or unfair disciplinary practices, especially those that exclude a student from developing healthy and active habits.

Please withdraw HF 514 and protect our students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Dively". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "D" and a cursive "Dively".

David Dively, Executive Director

David.Dively@state.mn.us



February 28, 2025

Honorable Peggy Bennett
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Bennett,

The Minnesota School Boards Association is an organization comprised of all 331 school boards across Minnesota. We write to share our support for HF 1052 that would allow for some flexibility for K-3 discipline in Minnesota schools and provide our school administrators more oversight in managing student behavior. We believe this change will help create safer and more effective learning environments for all students and staff.

The current mandate for K-3 nonexclusionary discipline often ties the hands of administrators, forcing them to keep disruptive students in the classroom even when their behavior poses a serious threat to the learning environment or the safety of others – both students and staff. This not only disrupts the education of other students but can also escalate problematic behaviors and create a sense of impunity. We understand and support the need to prioritize student learning and eliminate disparities based on a student's race or disability.

School administrators are best positioned to assess individual situations and make informed decisions about appropriate disciplinary measures. They need the flexibility to utilize a range of interventions, including – when necessary – the last option of removing a student from the classroom temporarily.

By allowing up to a three-day dismissal, we can empower administrators to create safer and more productive learning environments. This will benefit all students, including those who require additional support to manage their behavior. It may also benefit parents in allowing time to meet with school staff to create a joint re-entry plan that is in the best interest of the student and will help set the student up for success with members of both the family and school staff coming to an agreed upon plan and executing it together.

We ask the committee to support HF 1052 and entrust administrators to make sound decisions about student discipline. This change is crucial for improving school climate and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
Minnesota School Boards Association