

To: Minnesota Senate K-12 Education Policy Committee

From: Tatem Rios– PSEO student 2016 – 2018, now PhD student at MIT

Re: SF 2769

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I strongly support SF 2769 to create a task force to review PSEO and recommend improvements. This is especially important now, as some school boards and superintendents have pushed changes that would let districts decide which students may participate, which courses they can take, and how much colleges and universities will be reimbursed. Those types of changes risk limiting access and weakening a program that opens doors for students.

PSEO made a massive difference in my life. As a first-generation four-year college student, I began taking courses through PSEO at Inver Hills Community College during my junior and senior years of high school. A faculty member there encouraged me to consider engineering, which helped me see a clear path forward. Because PSEO allowed me to earn college credit while completing high school requirements, I avoided taking on thousands of dollars in tuition costs before I even knew what I wanted to study. Because I did not have funds available for college upfront, PSEO was the difference between taking on significant debt and graduating debt free. I earned three associate degrees, continued on to study chemical engineering at the University of Minnesota, and gained early lab experience that led to multiple industry opportunities while I was still an undergraduate.

Today I am pursuing my PhD at MIT, and I will be returning to Minnesota this summer for a graduate internship at 3M. My goal is to build my career in Minnesota long term. Programs like PSEO strengthen that talent pipeline by helping students find direction early and reducing financial barriers.

I also want to highlight that getting clear, consistent information about PSEO can be difficult for students and families, and access often depends on what a school happens to communicate. That is why it is essential that young people have seats on the task force alongside educators. Students can speak directly to the real barriers and what would make PSEO easier to navigate.

Please support SF 2769.

Sincerely,
Tatem Rios

Statement in Support of HF 2544 from Dr. Joe Nathan:

55+ year Mn public school educator, researcher, PTA President, contributor to original PSEO bill drafting & to refinements of law since 1985

1. Original purposes of PSEO Law
 - a. Provide academic challenge for students seeking it (92% credit earned at Mn State Institutions, higher g.p.a than “regular” students at many places
 - b. Provide more “adult like” learning environment for those who would achieve more in such an environment (i.e. student who worked half time, had low grades, participated in PSEO and was Dean’s list)
 - c. Save taxpayers & families money (achieved \$15 million/year for taxpayers, almost \$60 million for families)
 - d. Encourage more dual credit in high schools (dramatic expansion of various approaches, with valuable legislative support
 - e. Added goal – expand opportunities for hands on learning (i.e. youngster participating in a construction class – If they’re going to call this school, I’ll be there every day!”

2. Extremely valuable tool to help Mn Legislatures make progress toward goals including
 - a. the “attainment goal” and
 - b. closing achievement gaps (please see two attachments) (esp valuable for students of all races from low/moderate income families, first gen. students)

3. Bi-partisan support from the very beginning

4. Some refinements valuable such as
 - a. Increased communication between high schools & colleges
 - b. Ensuring that provisions are followed regarding information sharing with students & families (more than half of districts are not currently doing this)

5. Widely cited and replicated around the country