

April 9, 2021

TO: Members
Senate Tax Committee

FROM: Brad Lundell
Executive Director, Schools for Equity in Education

RE: Support for SF 960—Referendum Equalization

I want to express School for Equity in Education's (SEE) support for the increase in referendum equalization in Article 1, Section 10 of SF 960. Districts with low levels of property wealth are at a distinct disadvantage when seeking to pass voter-approved education-related levies. This leaves many of these districts well below state average per pupil revenue amounts, translating into larger class sizes and fewer program offerings for students living in these districts.

The approximately \$26 million proposed to equalize voter-approved referendum levies in SF 960 is a strong statement toward recognizing the need for greater property tax fairness as it relates to school funding. We thank Senator Chamberlain for introducing SF 626, which is the basis for the provision in the bill, and the Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee for including this initiative in their omnibus education finance and policy bill.

As has been the case over the past decade, it is often difficult to know whether the funding for equalization efforts should be carried in the tax target or the education target. I believe flexibility may be in order as the final budget accords are reached this session, but the most important thing is that this provision is passed. SEE is ready to weigh in whenever and wherever its input is sought to help in that effort.

In closing, this provision is a strong statement in support of greater property tax fairness. It is a significant and needed step toward the goal of creating a truly equitable education funding system.

If you have any further questions regarding SEE's position on this particular issue or other issues relating to SF 960, do not hesitate to contact me at brad.lundell@schoolsforequity.org or (651) 647-6251/(612) 220-7459.

SEE Districts

- Albany
- Albert Lea
- Annandale
- Anoka-Hennepin
 - Austin
 - Belle Plaine
 - Big Lake
 - Braham
- Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose
 - Byron
- Cambridge-Isanti
 - Cannon Falls
 - Centennial
- Chisago Lakes
- Dassel-Cokato
 - Delano
- East Central
 - Faribault
 - Forest Lake
 - Fridley
 - Hastings
- Hinckley-Finlayson
- Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted
 - Hutchinson
 - Jordan
- Kasson-Mantorville
 - Kimball
 - Lake City
 - Litchfield
 - Maple Lake
 - Medford
 - Melrose
 - Milaca
 - Monticello
 - Mora
- New London-Spicer
 - New Prague
 - North Branch
 - Northfield
 - Owatonna
 - Paynesville
 - Pine Island
 - Princeton
- Prior Lake-Savage
 - Rockford
 - Rocori
 - Roseau
- Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan
 - Royalton
 - Rush City
- Sartell-St. Stephen
 - St. Francis
- St. Michael-Albertville
 - Stewartville
 - Stillwater
 - Waconia
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- Resource Training and Solutions
- St. Croix River Education District
- SW Metro Intermediate District