



February 16, 2021

Chair Chamberlain
95 University Ave W
St. Paul, MN 55103

Re: Governor's Budget Bills (SF960 & SF973)

Dear Chair Chamberlain and members of the committee,

This has been an unprecedented year for Minnesota students, with school closures, the digital divide, and disrupted learning compounding existing barriers to a high-quality, equitable education. This year, more than ever, it is essential that the legislature prioritize significant investments in research-backed strategies that can help move the needle to address achievement gaps, disparities in discipline, inequitable enrollment rates in rigorous coursework, lack of access to high-quality early learning, and much more. If we miss this chance, a generation of students could be left behind. Here, we highlight several priorities from the Governor's budget bills that we believe are most critical for student success in the coming years.

SF 973: ADDRESSING LEARNING LOSS AND STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

This bill contains a number of investments that will be essential to COVID recovery, and should be prioritized by the committee. There are a growing number of studies which indicate that learning loss—particularly for students of color and low-income students—due to COVID-19 school closures is something we cannot ignore.¹ SF973 contains a number of investments that would provide needed student support and accelerate learning, including expanding access to tutoring, summer preschool, learning acceleration and college readiness initiatives, and community partnerships.

We also support SF973's investment in student well-being. When we talk about COVID-19 recovery, it's important that we not only focus on academics, but also on student social-emotional health. This bill starts to address this need by investing in neighborhood programs and a mental health support expansion. We urge the committee to advance these provisions as soon as possible.

SF 960: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF MINNESOTA'S STUDENTS

While we address the impact of COVID-19, it's important to also invest in efforts to address some of the inequities that existed prior to the pandemic. SF960 does this by investing in a number of programs that are meant to provide more equitable access to rigorous coursework, improve school climate, and racially diversify the teacher workforce. We support many of the proposed investments, and raise particular attention to the following:

- Expanding Rigorous Coursework for BIPOC students and students in greater Minnesota (Lines 43.20-44.12): In Minnesota, gaps in advanced coursework enrollment start in elementary school with Gifted and Talented and grow larger as students move through their K-12 education.² To address this, SF960 would invest \$5 million annually to expand access to rigorous coursework programming—Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), concurrent enrollment (CE), and career and technical education (CTE)—for students of color and other underserved populations.

¹ Kogan, V. & Lavertu, S. (January 2021). "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Student Achievement on Ohio's Third-Grade English Language Arts Assessment." The Ohio State University; Kuhfeld, M., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E. & Lewis, K. (November 2020). "Learning during COVID-19: Initial findings on students' reading and math achievement and growth." Collaborative for Student Growth.

² Kaput, K. (November 2020). "Closing the Rigorous Coursework Gap: Supporting College and Career Readiness for Minnesota's Students of Color." EdAllies.

- Nonexclusionary Discipline Grants (Lines 53.8-53.17): There is growing research that nonexclusionary practices help to reduce suspensions and improve school climate,³ while exclusionary practices have a negative impact on student achievement⁴ and long-term outcomes.⁵ This grant would help to address Minnesota's long and well-documented history of disproportionately suspending and expelling students of color and students with disabilities.⁶
- Early Learning Scholarships (67.11-67.16): Currently, 40,000 low-income Minnesota children under five cannot afford high-quality early learning programs.⁷ Early learning scholarships address this by giving Minnesota's neediest families the financial support to help pay for high-quality child care that prepares them for school.
- Grow Your Own Program Grants (Lines 49.13-50.24):- Research indicates that teachers who are prepared through Grow Your Own Programs are more racially diverse than traditional teacher preparation programs and, after completing the program, are more likely to be retained.⁸ We support this allocation because it creates more pathways into the teaching profession.
- Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program (Lines 49.6-49.12): In 2016, the Minnesota Legislature did a one-time investment of \$3 million for the Northwest Regional Partnership to develop and provide high-quality opportunities for concurrent enrollment teachers to earn additional graduate-level credentials in their subject area. Through this partnership, 605 teachers from 196 districts across Minnesota have enrolled in the program.⁹ Given the benefits of concurrent enrollment, the Minnesota Legislature should reinvest in this program.

In addition to these investments, SF960 would also make a needed policy change to compensatory revenue—state funds that are supposed to support the academic achievement of students who are not meeting state standards. Currently, only 50% of the money has to be allocated directly to the schools that generate the funds, and the rest can be used across the district. The proposal would change this to require 80% of the funds go directly to the school, which is important in making sure that the funds are going to the students they are supposed to support.

These bills provide several important targeted funding streams to help our state's most underserved students and we hope to see these investments advanced through the Senate education omnibus bill.

Sincerely,



Matt Shaver
Policy Director
mshaver@edalliesmn.org

³ Augustine, C., Engberg, J., Grimm, G., et. al. (2018). "Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District." RAND Corporation.

⁴ Pearman, F., Curran, C., Fisher, B., & Gardella, J. (October 2019). "Are Achievement Gaps Related to Discipline Gaps? Evidence from National Data." American Educational Research Association.

⁵ Shollenberger, R. (April 2013). "Racial Disparities in School Suspension and Subsequent Outcomes: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997." The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

⁶ Kaput, K. (July 2019). "For Students of Color With Special Needs, Action on School Discipline is Urgent." EdAllies.

⁷ Close Gaps by 5 website. (Accessed February 16, 2021). <http://closegapsby5.org/>

⁸ Gist, C., Biano, M., & Lynn, M. (2018). "Examining Grow Your Own Programs Across the Teacher Development Continuum: Mining Research on Teachers of Color and Nontraditional Educator Pipelines." Journal of Teacher Education.

⁹ Kovash, J. (2020). "Regional Partnership: Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program Report to the Legislature." Lakes Country Service Cooperative