



Education Partnerships Coalition Parent Support Testimony for S.F. 351

My name is Maricela Orozco, from Northfield MN. I would like to start by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to be able to give my written testimony regarding Distance Learning Financial aid due to COVID-19. I am a mother of 4. Two of my children are in elementary, one is in Head Start and my youngest stays home.

The Pandemic has affected our family in many ways. My kids for instance have been very stressed and have even started arguing more than usual. My oldest son has cried a lot because he doesn't want to be doing school from home. My kindergartener has even stated that his head starts hurting from being on the screen for so long. Financially, we have been affected because both my husband and I work in the restaurant industry. With restaurants only doing carry out I have been forced to stay at home and my husband works minimal hours. We have been spending more money on groceries now that everyone is home all day. I have also noticed my energy bill went up since distance learning.

I am asking Chair Sen. Roger Chamberlain and the members of the Education Committee to please consider passing the S.F. 351 Distance learning financial aid for families due to COVID-19 bill. This is important to me because I know that there are other families in need just like us. We need this in our community. Just like us there are other families that have been unable to qualify for additional help that has been provided.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and for considering the S.F. 351 Distance learning financial aid for families due to COVID-19 bill.

Maricela Orozco, Parent/ Fellow
Education Partnerships Coalition

Dear Sen. Roger C. Chamberlain and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Mayrany Barreto, and I live in Northfield MN. I am a Mother of 4 girls. Two of my girls go to Sibley Elementary School, one goes to Head Start and the other one stays home with

me. I would like to urge you to support bill S.F. 351-: Distance learning financial aid for families due to COVID-19.

The pandemic has affected my daughters academically and the whole family financially. My two elementary aged daughters are in special education and have a hard time focusing on school work. They need extra attention and help with homework. I have been forced to make the hard decision of not working so that I can stay home and help them with school work and not have to pay child care. If I would have kept working we would have to pay for child care for all four girls and that would end up costing us more than I would make. Also, when the girls are in school we can count on them receiving breakfast and lunch at school. Now, the girls are home more and we have been spending more money on groceries. This has been hard to keep up with due to one less paycheck coming in.

I urge you Sen. Roger Chamberlain and members of the Education Committee to support bill S.F. 351-: Distance learning financial aid for families due to COVID-19 . This is not only important to me but to my whole community. There have been a lot of families that have been affected by the pandemic in my community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.

Mayrany Barreto, Parent/ Fellow
Education Partnerships Coalition

I would like to thank Sen. Roger C. Chamberlain and the members of the Education Committee for giving me the opportunity to submit my written testimony. My name is Tayde Rodriguez, and I live in Faribault, MN. I have four children and their ages are 19, 17, 11, 6. My three youngest children attend Northfield Public Schools. My oldest is a first-generation college student. Due to the pandemic, my oldest daughter has expressed interest in pursuing her education in the field of medicine.

The pandemic has impacted my children and everyone in my family as this was a drastic change. My husband and I lost our jobs, we had our children at home because they couldn't go to school, my husband contracted COVID-19. I didn't know what to do, it was a very stressful time for my entire family. My 6 year old struggled to understand why his dad had to be separated from us at home, why he couldn't go back to school to see his friends and teachers. I was scared my children would contract COVID-19 since their dad had it and my oldest daughter suffers from asthma. I didn't know how I was going to pay our bills and keep a roof over our heads. Never in my 20 years of living in the United States have I applied for government assistance. However, last year I applied for SNAP and that program helped me and my family. I know I am only one story, however, I know of many other families that have been struggling with the same things.

I am writing to you today with the rest of the families like me in mind. These times are difficult for us parents and our children. Supporting bill S.F. 351 will provide Minnesotans like me hope and relief as we navigate and surpass the pandemic. I plead you to please consider supporting bill S. F 351.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Taide Rodriguez, Parent/ Fellow
Education Partnerships Coalition

I would like to thank Sen. Roger C. Chamberlain and the members of the Education Committee for giving me the opportunity to submit my written testimony. My name is Blanca Terronez and I would like to share my experience with distance learning during the pandemic. I live in Faribault MN and I am a mother of four. My children are ages 15, 11, 10, and my youngest is 2-years-old.

Distance learning has been difficult for everyone in my family. I have noticed that the quality of my children's education has decreased during the pandemic. They struggle a lot more paying attention to their online classes and I often see eating a lot more now that they are staying at home all day. In my home, our employment was affected by the pandemic as my husband experienced a decrease of hours at work since last summer and our income was unexpectedly lower than in previous years. We struggled a lot with childcare. Even though my older children do not need a babysitter they still needed an adult that could supervise them and make sure that they were doing the Google Meets with teachers, doing their assignments, etc. When the school year started, I used to receive multiple emails from my children's teachers saying that my kids did not join the meets, they missed school, they were late, not turning in assignments, and not connecting. I had to add a new expense to my family budget and hire a person that could watch and supervise my children at home while I went to work. I applied for P-EBT and even though all my children were in free and reduced lunch I only received help for one of them. The help was vital as it allowed me to economize and be able to pay the person that was watching my children.

I ask you to please support bill S.F. 351 and to invest in families like mine that are struggling with distance learning and could use the additional funds during the pandemic.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify before you.

Blanca Terronez, Parent/ Fellow
Education Partnerships Coalition

Chair Chamberlain and members of the Education Committee,

I am a parent of 5 in the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood with three children attending a St. Paul Public School through distance learning. Although SPPS has decided to move to in-person learning as of Feb 1st, our family has opted to continue distance learning due to health concerns. My 5th grader and his father both have Cystic Fibrosis, and his father also has heart failure. My younger son and I have asthma.

Although distance learning has its difficulties, securing access to adequate internet speed and data limits has been one of the most vital and expensive resources that I've had to provide. Initially, I was signed up for a \$50 per month plan through Xfinity, and it was sufficient for a time. When distance learning started at the beginning of the pandemic, we had three children using Ipads all day and myself working online from home; we started to experience lags and receive overage charges for exceeding the data limit resulting in \$300+ internet bills! I worked with Xfinity to find a price that would support what we need; a higher speed and unlimited data. I am paying \$125/month and am pleased with the bill's stability, and more importantly, it works, but \$125 is much money for a low-income family to dish out just for the internet.

Working from home has its advantages and disadvantages. I have to navigate my schedule and three different schedules, ensuring they are logged on to Google meets on time and providing redirection to ensure they complete their work for the day. Because I work during the day, it's harder to help the kids with their school work. My 5th grader needs more reading support than I think the school can offer, and my 3rd grader flourishes when he can have more dedicated attention. It would be great to have access to additional resources.

Sincerely,

Erica Valliant
ericavalliant@yahoo.com
651-788-3320

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning. The challenges my family faces during this unprecedented time are many, and here are some:

After schools have taken the distance learning mode, many responsibilities that my wife and I were not prepared for have been placed on our shoulders which includes supervising our children during learning hours and many others. The children expect from us the same guidance and support they were getting from their teachers at school. Teachers are trained for

what they do, but parents are not. Sometimes, there are technology challenges which we couldn't solve. We live in an apartment where the kids have to learn in the bedrooms next to each other. I have kids in 3rd grade, 5th grade, 7th grade, 8th grade, and in 9th grade. You can imagine how stressing it is to have such number of children learning next to each other and each expecting academic support from a parent who is not trained for that and who is also financially struggling.

Financially, the cost of damage by the pandemic to my family is beyond human understanding because since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Minnesota, I have not been able to work full time. I have had to divide my time between work and family notably supporting my children with school work – staying close to them to make sure that they stay on task and help them where I can and with what I can.

When the children became full time on distance learning at home, the family budget has increased because the free or reduced meals at schools aren't very accessible for us and is no longer there and at this time and I have to provide all that. Despite my reduced hours of work, the responsibility to put food on the table for my young ones is inevitable and non-negotiable. I am a father of such a large family and a student in master's degree program at Saint Mary's University.

Any support provided lights a candle at the end of the tunnel.

Mohamed Yussuf.

Resident in St. Cloud, MN.

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning.

Distance learning has been so hard and it has affected my ability to concentrate on my job due to the number of calls I get from the school during working hours. My wife was consumed in the distance learning too as she can't go to work because of child care responsibilities.. She also had to supervise school going kids as well as toddlers compounded by the inadequate housing as our apartment is small and with only one living room.

Any amount of financial relief would go a long way in lessening the amount of stress and hardship our family faces during the distance learning time.

Thank you.

Abdi Ibrahim

Resident in St. Joseph MN

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning.

1. Loss of income to help kids at home during the distance learning.
2. School meals- some parents solely depended on the school meals but due to pandemic and stay at home orders, low income families have struggles to provide meals for their kids
3. School supplies- I am a parent and a student in a four year college with 5 of my children turned to virtual learning this year, has been my biggest challenge this year. Due to this challenge, three triplet 4 year old kids of mine who were supposed to be in pre- school this year did not go to school due crisis I am facing this year. I work part time to be with my children during the online learning.

Adow Ali

Resident in St. Cloud MN

To Whom It May Concern,

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning.

The challenges my family and I faced due to distance learning were numerous. From the very start, my children; ages 11, 9 and 3 were affected negatively. Being away from friends and out of the school environment caused stress on my oldest son who had made a lot of friends and was very active in sports and clubs in his school. He also struggles with ADHD. After a few weeks he became weary which made staying at home very challenging for us all. The curriculum and paperwork given to us from their school seemed very difficult without the face-to-face instruction from their teachers. We were not as prepared for the shift as we had hoped. This made more stress for our family.

Financially, our income decreased because I had to stay with the children throughout the day. My husband's income decreased because of the pandemic and stay-at-home orders for businesses and churches. My husband is a Pastor and he runs a small construction business as well. Both of which brought little to no income in during the months of April-November. We depleted our savings and needed to request help from the state and bank loans to help us through. This also caused much stress on our family.

Many of the families in our community struggled with lay-offs, low unemployment checks and the stress of having children who were home for distance learning. Children were left home alone unsupervised and not responsible enough to log in to class or complete their assignments

without support. We rent space through Atonement Lutheran Church for our church services. Thankfully, they were gracious enough to allow us to bring kids from our community to the church during the day. This allowed parents to go to jobs or job search and leave their kids in a safe environment while being supported with their distance learning. Once the word got out, our numbers continued to grow. Although we had to turn some families away due to being short on volunteer staff, we were happy to be able to help the families we did.

We are still desperately trying to recover from all the challenges due to this pandemic. The difficulties we faced and yet to face because of distance learning are yet to be seen. We pray for the resilience and protection of our kids daily.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Daniels

St. Cloud, MN

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning. Some of the challenges other parents and I lack in distance learning is teaching experience and computer literacy. Also poor commutation with teachers. It's a culture gap between parents and students learning and teaching style. Also trying to find the right resources for the child or families is challenging and includes isolation, less motivation, physical and mental health struggles. Parents struggle between work, childcare and distance learning and that adds to the stress of bills for the additional expenses on food, household supplies and on the top of that, covid-19 health issues. Some parents had to quit their job to become an online teacher for their kids. This pandemic has brutally hit the pockets of millions of parents.

Lenora Jackson
St. Cloud

I support Senate File 351 to provide support to parents like me who are struggling with distance learning. Some of the challenges that people of color is facing during distant learning is not having the physical ability to be in a classroom. It has created more isolation and loneliness with children, with my child. The physical distance also makes it difficult for my child to understand the on-line course content. Having none or limited amount of internet access also cause a huge impact. There are times when devices don't work properly which cause children to fall behind in assignments and falling further behind in the lesson. The financial challenges has affected all families especially black women like myself, that has to work from home with less pay to be with my child. Some other families were laid off with no pay. With the lack of education there are no additional job therefore no sufficient income to support our families. Since distant

learning there has been an increase of household bills such as electricity, internet access and materials. Distant learning has greatly affected children K-3 manly due to the lack of peers they have low or no social and emotional skills with none or low structure. Again this has truly been a huge impact in our Black Communities.

Keshia Anderson-King and Buddy King
St. Cloud

I'm writing in support for SF 351. As a parent I have faced many challenges during distance learning. One being keeping my kid motivated to log in and actually get their work done. Then after logging into the computer 4 different times a day. Now I have to push and force them to do homework. Helping with my 2nd grader schoolwork is a big challenge for parents who's not sure how to do the material. I've also face financial challenges, now that the kids are home more I have to supply more for them to eat, and things to try to keep them entertained. I have spent more money last year and this year than any year before because with the kids being home all day and not able to play with friends or stay at friends' houses. I have to supply more things to keep them happy and not fall into depression. This has been a big challenge for me but also for my children. I'm literally living from check to check because I have to put more money into my home to make it more comfortable (since this is where we are 24 hours a day) more money to buy games and books (because they no longer get books from the library). Some people think this is a way to save money but how can a single mother of two save money when she's only making enough to live.

Signed a tired Mother

KoriAnn Carter

St. Cloud, MN