



February 22, 2021

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

Re: Requiring State Assessments under Senate File 628

Dear Chair Chamberlain and members of the committee,

As the saying goes, if we can't measure it, we can't improve it. In Minnesota, there's only one way we've been able to measure student learning throughout the state and that's through our standards-aligned tests, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment.

Nationwide school closures due to COVID-19 have exacerbated education gaps and disrupted learning—especially for students of color and low-income students.¹ Learning loss cannot be ignored. Policymakers must commit to gathering actionable data about where students are and build aggressive plans to ensure they are on track for success. Without data, we cannot make decisions about how resources should be equitably distributed, what research-backed and appropriate interventions to use, and how to plan for long-term COVID-19 recovery.

While Minnesota understandably canceled the MCAs in spring 2020, our state now has the ability and resources to administer assessments in a safe way that meets the needs of students and families—whether they are in distance, hybrid, or in-person learning.

SF628 is a great start to ensuring that we can get this data. In particular, we support this bill because:

- It will help planning for fall 2021: When school leaders know how their students are doing, they can better understand how to tailor support to ensure that each child has a path for academic success. Furthermore, having baseline data can help policymakers and state leaders in deciding how to equitably invest and allocate resources.
- Provides Information to Parents: More than ever, parents are engaged in their children's education and need to know how their kids are doing relative to grade level expectations. The MCAs would provide parents with objective information and help them advocate for their children.
- Administering the MCAs this spring is doable: We understand that MDE has put in place additional efforts to ensure successful remote testing. We applaud these efforts as they can provide educators and families with confidence in reliable MCA administration.

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.

Quality, useful academic data is important to ensuring that our state doesn't leave students, particularly those who have already been traditionally underserved, behind. If we do not administer the MCAs for another year, this means that we have lost two years of data that could have helped us properly support students, and instead we will be compounding the inequities students already experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Josh Crosson
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