



February 22, 2021

RE: SF 628 (Chamberlain)

Dear Senate Education Committee Members:

While the pandemic has disrupted public education in numerous ways, it also has more deeply illuminated the education disparities that considerable numbers of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, low-income, English Language Learners, and/or students with disabilities experience in schools across the state.

This school year, communities have gone to Herculean efforts to support student learning. We need to make sure that data on student learning will be gathered from students participating in all forms of learning so it can be used to strategically target resources and supports to students most in need.

**We urge you to support SF 628 to ensure there is a clearly articulated plan for administering state summative assessments in spring 2021.**

Our state summative assessment data is critical to more comprehensively understanding student learning loss during the pandemic—to help inform targeted supports and interventions that can meet students' needs—and, concurrently, to inform how our state and local systems allocate vital resources that can support student learning in an equitable manner. Data from this spring will provide a baseline to understand not just the impact of COVID-19, but our progress toward recovery, and we need to ensure there is a plan to gather data that includes students learning in all settings.

**Comprehensive assessment data will help teachers and schools better plan for fall 2021.** When school leaders know the current academic health of their school population, they better understand how to tailor their support to ensure each child has a path forward to academic recovery and success. More broadly, we need data that is comparable across schools, districts, and demographics to identify what is working that we should seek to replicate. State assessment data will also give policymakers

evidence to show the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and help schools and districts receive the resources they need.

**The playing field for disadvantaged students is already uneven—comparable data helps level that field.** We need more information about what students of color and students from low-income backgrounds have learned, not less. Even before the pandemic, underserved students in Minnesota were given fewer high-quality educational opportunities, missing out on preparation for college and careers. COVID-19 has increased these disparities and could have profound, long-term impacts on students and the health of Minnesota’s economy. In this time of disruption, assessments help ensure that every student *is not only counted but counts* and can receive the education they need to be on track for success in college and careers.

**More than ever, parents are engaged in their children’s learning.** With COVID-19—and students engaging in a distance or hybrid learning models—parents have newfound insight into what and how their children learn. State assessment data from spring 2021 positions our state and schools to build on this engagement.

**A clearly articulated plan and process for administering state summative assessments for students in all forms of learning will help schools and families prepare.** The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has a history of creating flexibilities and accommodations for schools and students, ranging from a long testing window to supports and resources for students with special needs. We understand that MDE has put in place additional efforts to ensure successful testing this spring. Clearly articulating these plans will help everyone better understand how and why summative data is being gathered and provide educators and families with confidence in reliable assessment administration.

Quality, useful academic data has never been more important. Thank you for your efforts to ensure data will be gathered and can be used to strategically target effective resources and supports to students.

Sincerely,

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