



March 1, 2021

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

Re: PSEO Modifications Senate File 939

Dear Chair Chamberlain and members of the committee,

We are writing to express our support for SF 939, which would expand access to Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), particularly for traditionally underserved students who need access to the program the most. PSEO allows students to enroll in courses taught by college instructors on college campuses and earn college credit at no cost. This allows students to enter college with some course requirements already met and with college credits, which can shorten time to completion for a degree and lessen the debt burden, while also allowing students to build college-level study and academic skills.

In 2019, over 10,500 Minnesota students participated in PSEO. While there are ongoing disparities in PSEO access by race and ethnicity, enrollment rates for Asian, Black, and Latino students have grown significantly over the past decade. This is a trend Minnesota should support and accelerate given the program's tangible benefits.

In November 2020, EdAllies published a report on inequities in rigorous coursework—including PSEO—in Minnesota.¹ Our report listed a number of barriers students face in accessing PSEO, several of which SF 939 would rectify. In particular, we support:

- Improving Accountability for Data Dissemination (Lines 2.17-2.19): Statute has deadlines requiring districts to have up-to-date information on their website and on materials that are distributed to parents about PSEO. However, we know that not all districts meet this requirement, which can adversely impact students' ability to enroll in PSEO. We support the provision that would waive the May 30 deadline for students to enroll if districts have not met their statutory obligation to inform students and families about the program.
- Remove "PSEO gag rule" (Lines 2.24-2.30): Current state law prohibits colleges from advertising the program's financial benefits to high school students. Revoking this prohibition would increase transparency and ensure that students and families have the most comprehensive information possible about which rigorous coursework program is best for them.

¹ Kaput, K. (2020). "Closing the Rigorous Coursework Gap: Supporting College and Career Readiness for Minnesota's Students of Color." EdAllies.

- Participation in High School Activities (Lines 3.19-3.20): Participating in leadership activities or organizations is an important part in the development of high school students. Those who participate in PSEO should not be barred from being able to participate.
- Equal Weighting for Grades (Lines 4.5-4.7): Students' grades—which can impact class rank and GPAs—should not be negatively impacted because they choose to take a PSEO course over another rigorous course, like concurrent enrollment. This provision would rectify this inequity and ensure that all students receive equal weight for the same letter grade.
- Increase Transportation Access (Lines 5.15-5.17): For students, particularly those traditionally underserved, who want to access PSEO, a lack of access to transportation could be a barrier to being able to get to the college campus. This provision would address this inequity and help to address a barrier to accessing transportation for PSEO.

These policy changes would help more students—particularly students of color and low-income students—access PSEO and become better prepared for college and career. We applaud People for PSEO's leadership on this issue and look forward to continuing to work with this committee to help more students have access to these opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Shaver". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matt" and last name "Shaver" clearly distinguishable.

Matt Shaver
Policy Director
mshaver@edalliesmn.org