



April 6, 2021

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

Re: E-12 Finance and Policy Omnibus Bill (Senate File 960)

Dear Chair Chamberlain and members of the committee,

The past year has been challenging for educators, families, and—most importantly—students. With so many different approaches on how to move forward and recover, EdAllies is grateful to this committee for putting together an omnibus bill that leaves out several detrimental ideas while including a number of student-centered provisions that would address some of the inequities that students have experienced before and during the pandemic.

First and foremost we want to commend this committee for not including harmful licensure changes that would remove pathways to the classroom—particularly for teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas. All teachers, no matter their tier, have been sacrificing and working hard during COVID and their students deserve to know that their teachers will continue to be in the classroom moving forward.

We also commend the committee for including the provisions:

- Expanding World's Best Workforce Measures (Lines 17.25-18.9): Each young person leaving our K-12 education system should have the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and forge the path to a rewarding career. For too many students—particularly those from historically underserved backgrounds—we are falling short. We support inclusion of provisions that would require districts to track and report about 9th grade on-track to graduation rates. Students who do better in 9th grade are much more likely to have good grades later in high school, graduate from high school and pursue a postsecondary education.<sup>1</sup>
- Improving Charter School Accountability and Quality Through Authorizers (Lines 33.2-34.3): High-quality charter authorizing is a critical component to ensuring that families have high-quality school options for their children. These provisions would increase transparency by creating a clear timeline for authorizers on corrective action, set guardrails for charter schools to have a better relationship with their authorizer, and raise the overall quality of charter authorizers.
- Allocation for LETRS training (Lines 74.16-74.20): Reading proficiency is critical for success in college, career, and life. Research has found that students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, being able to teach reading was one of the most common things over 50 educators told us that they didn't learn, but wished that they had, in teacher preparation.<sup>3</sup> Providing dedicated funding to LETRS training would train more than 2,000 teachers in the science of reading, which would have a positive impact on our youngest and most underserved learners.

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<sup>1</sup> Easton, J., Johnson, E. & Sartain, L. (September 2017). "The Predictive Power of Ninth-Grade GPA." UChicago Consortium on School Research.

<sup>2</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters." [http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early\\_Warning\\_Full\\_Report-2010.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kaput, K. (February 2020). "10 Things All Teacher Candidates Should Learn in Teacher Prep." EdAllies. [https://edalliesmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Teacher-Prep-Brief\\_Final\\_Digital.pdf](https://edalliesmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Teacher-Prep-Brief_Final_Digital.pdf)



- Ending Lunch Shaming (Lines 94.6-94.25): All students deserve to have a school meal without punishment or shame. Unfortunately, lunch shaming still happens too often in Minnesota schools. We commend the Senate for taking decisive action to ensure that our state's most underserved students are getting a nutritious meal, regardless of their family situation.
- Expanding Access to PSEO (Lines 24.9-28.20): 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. These provisions—removing the "PSEO gag rule," equal weighting for grades, increase transportation access, and more—would help more students, particularly students of color and low-income students, access PSEO and become better prepared for college and career.
- Requiring Districts to Provide Mentorship (Line 66.25): High-quality teacher mentorship programs have been proven to increase teacher retention and job satisfaction,<sup>4</sup> and can also lead to better instructional practices that result in increased student achievement.<sup>5</sup> This provision provides a solution to the current conflict between statute and rule. With teachers currently required to participate in mentorship and schools only encouraged to provide it, many teachers can find themselves unable to renew their licenses through no fault of their own.
- COVID-19 Recovery Services for Students with Disabilities (Lines 79.17-80.32): When schools closed in spring 2020, all students—particularly those historically underserved—were impacted. Gaps in internet and device access, varying levels of student participation, worries about mental health and social-emotional learning have left students and families concerned about the long-term implications. This is particularly true for students with disabilities. We support this provision because it would provide needed support and long-term planning for students with disabilities.
- Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Partnership (lines 68.25-71.4): Concurrent enrollment—also known as "College in the Schools"—is the second largest rigorous coursework program in the state, with 30,000 students enrolled in 2018. Despite the importance of the program, staff training requirements present a major barrier to sustaining and expanding the program. This provision builds off a 2016 initiative to develop opportunities for concurrent enrollment teachers to earn additional graduate-level credentials in their subject area, and expands who can be in the partnership so that more teachers can gain access to the training.
- Allocation for Grow Your Own Pathways (Lines 72.26-73.23): 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.<sup>6</sup> We support this provision and allocation because it creates more pathways into the teaching profession—particularly for non-traditional individuals—while addressing some of the financial barriers.

We urge this committee to consider expanding on the World's Best Workforce measures align with Senate File 1537, and include:

- The percentage of students enrolled in AP, IB, PSEO, and concurrent enrollment,
- The percentage of students who took the AP and IB exams, and

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<sup>4</sup> Gray, L., Taie, S. & O'Rear, I. (April 2015). "Public School Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the First Five Years: Results from the First through Fifth Waves of the 2007-2008 Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study." National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>5</sup> Empson, L. (June 2017). "Students Gain up to Five Months of Additional Learning When New Teachers Receive High-Quality Mentoring." New Teacher Center.

<sup>6</sup> Gist, C., Bianco, 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.



- the percentage of who passed AP and IB exams.

We also believe all students need to feel engaged, supported, and included in school--from the classroom to extracurriculars. We urge the committee to reconsider including lines 21.1-21.5 and, while we appreciate the inclusion of lines 21.9-21.11, we hope to see further progress come out of final negotiations.

We look forward to working further with this committee. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Shaver".

Matt Shaver  
Policy Director  
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