

April 5, 2021

Dear Senator Chamberlain & Members of the Senate Education Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) and our partners at Hunger Solutions Minnesota, EdAllies, and MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger are writing in strong support of Article 7 in the SF960-A1 to prohibit lunch shaming in Minnesota.

As statewide anti-hunger advocates and leaders, we have engaged in healthy meal access advocacy for more than a decade. Students' stories of lunch shaming, lunch dumping, denial of diplomas and the right to participate in graduation, and other degrading practices such as low-balance stamps and stickers have been too numerous. These practices have no place in Minnesota's schools. We have worked tirelessly over the years to strengthen lunchroom protections for children with lunch debts or who lack money for school meals.

As we come closer to exiting this global pandemic, and thousands of Minnesota families are still reeling from unemployment and economic hardship, we must ensure that students are not facing new stresses and burdens about meal debt. These transactions and conversations must take place between adults.

The language in the SF960-A1 (lines 94.3-97.9) clarify that all school meals must be provided in a respectful manner by school staff and third party vendors. Maintaining the dignity of students in the lunchroom is critical to social and emotional well-being and also ensures that hungry children will not skip meals for fear of shame or embarrassment around an inability to pay.

We urge passage of Article 7 in the SF960-A1.

Sincerely,

Jessica Webster, *Staff Attorney, Legal Services Advocacy Project*
Steven Krikava, *Edina, MN & Board Member with MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger*
Matt Shaver, *Policy Director, EdAllies*
Colleen Moriarty, *Executive Director, Hunger Solutions Minnesota*