



Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition

February 28, 2022

To: Chair Richardson and Members of the House Education Policy Committee

Re: House File 3401

Dear Chair Richardson and Committee Members,

We write as the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition regarding HF 3401. Solutions Not Suspensions is a coalition of students, families, community members, and organizations committed to changing policies, practices, and mindsets in order to end exclusionary discipline practices that disproportionately impact students of color and instead foster positive school climates for all students.

This bill includes many provisions that would be tremendously helpful towards addressing the over-use of exclusionary discipline in Minnesota and the significant racial disparities in how discipline is used in Minnesota. As you know, Minnesotan students who are Black are eight times as likely as their white peers to be suspended, and Minnesotan students who are Indigenous are ten times as likely as their white peers to be suspended. Students who have disabilities are also far more likely than their non-disabled peers to be suspended. These inequities mean that some students are far more likely than others to miss out on class time and educational opportunity.

We are extremely grateful for the inclusion of the following pieces in this bill:

- Limiting the use of K-3 Suspensions (Article 3, Section 12). This is a top priority for our coalition and we are so grateful that this is part of this bill. We believe that young students should be in the classroom, along with the support they need, and that removal makes things worse. This provision would be a major step forward for Minnesota.
- District Discipline Policy Review and Suspension (Article 3, Sections 20-22). Our coalition believes in centering the voices of people most impacted. Students and families often find it frustrating that our current laws and policies do not guarantee an opportunity for them to raise concerns or request reconsideration of imposed suspensions. This would be a helpful step forward.
- Removing truancy and attendance issues as bases for dismissals in district discipline policies (Article 3, Section 21). Not being in class should not be a basis for imposing discipline that further disconnects students from class. We strongly support these common sense provisions.

- Strengthening Non-exclusionary Discipline Policies (Article 3, Section 21). This bill includes many important changes to promote non-exclusionary discipline, including:
 - Requiring reporting on pupil withdrawal agreements (Article 3, Sections 1, 11, 18);
 - Requiring use of non-exclusionary discipline practices (Article 3, Sections 10, 13, 16);
 - Ensuring students have access to make up work and alternative educational services (Article 3, Sections 14, 15; and
 - Other strengthening provisions (Article 3, Sections 9, 17, 19).
- Strengthening Restrictive Procedures protections for students who have disabilities (Article 3, Sections 29, 32). We support these important, added protections.
- Strengthening the Safe and Supportive Schools Act (Article 4, Sections 1-2). We support these pieces, particularly as they encourage schools to create positive school climates and use evidence-based social-emotional learning.

Thank you so much for your leadership on behalf of Minnesota's students. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this bill. We would be glad to discuss any of them further.

Sincerely,

Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition

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