

Minnesota House of Representatives
Education Finance Committee
Chair – Rep. Youakim
March 2, 2023

Re: Supporting HF 58 prohibiting Suspension for K-3rd grade

Dear Madam Chair and Members, good morning. My name is Idil Abdull, I am a Somali Autism Mom & a pissed-off advocate who would like to retire.

First, I would like to thank Rep. Richardson for carrying this important legislation and for always being in the corner of students and families.

Alright – so, here we meet again. As you all know, my son who has autism was suspended by teacher Kelly Morris and principal Jaysen Anderson in Bloomington School District on 5.3.2018. I am not going to repeat data and numbers of how students with disabilities are kicked out of their free and appropriate public education. You already know that 2+2 is four.

Madam Chair and Members, instead today I want to tell you that I contacted Bloomington school district's superintendent – Dr. Eric, and asked him if I could speak with the principal who suspended my kid. He agreed and we had a zoom meeting on 5.3.2022, four years after the suspension.

I asked principal Jaysen if he thinks suspending my son had any educational value. He said no.

I asked Principal Jaysen if he had remorse for suspending my son. He said yes.

I asked him if my son understood suspension; he said no and in hindsight, he would not have done it. I reminded him that as a principal of color, he bears a huge responsibility to ensure students are treated fairly and not punished unfairly.

Additionally, I requested public data about the training the principal and the teacher had on autism, behavior reduction techniques, and proactive antecedent strategies as well as culturally responsive methods. Both did not at that time.

You see Madam Chair and Members, **what we need in this education toolbox is not suspension; it is training, training, and training.** It is ensuring we are setting up the teachers and principals for success in how to not just teach children math and science, but how to use non-exclusionary methods and understand the needs of our students, particularly those with special needs.

I want to end with a message you told me Madam Chair years ago when MN had a divided legislature. You said – give me the house, the senate, and the governor's office, and we will make leaps and bounds to keep kids in the classroom. It seems that your wish has come true because that is exactly what you currently have. The ball is now in your corner to mean what you say and say what you mean.

Sincerely,

Idil Abdull