



MINNEAPOLIS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Urban Education. Global Citizens.

Dear legislators,

As a student enrolled in the Minneapolis Public Schools-University of St. Thomas ògrow your ownò program (MSTR) for special education teachers, I want to first thank you for your support for non-conventional teacher license programs. The funding appropriated to programs like MSTR facilitates a deeper connection to our community that cannot be easily quantified in state budget plans.

I am writing today to encourage you to support non-traditional pathways to bring people from diverse backgrounds into a teaching profession that is typically a barrier for marginalized people. This is especially ironic and speaks to your influence in funding programs that support marginalized people who want to serve our community but face a legitimate road block with environmental barriers, and in allowing partnerships to help mitigate the disparity that is created because of the system in place.

As a white woman with a disability, working in special education is important to me because I have found further education to be the ONLY means to escaping poverty. I have privilege based on my skin-tone; however, because I have a disability, I often have to justify and provide provisional documentation to further my education AND my career goals. This barrier is systemic and hard for people to cross.

The reason that programs like MSTR are unique and beneficial is multi-fold. We allow people who are marginalized by systemic measures to have a voice that helps other marginalized students rise above barriers in our environment. We also provide a space where aspiring teachers can help identify and support positive change to systemic barriers. We need to find inclusive measures for assuring high teacher competence and valuing a teacher who experiences the barriers on a personal level that many students experience.

Minnesota has a system in place that prevented me from even becoming a teacher until late in life. I pushed through barriers for years until I was able to earn my college degree. I worked hard during my undergrad years to understand college-level accommodations, and I pushed into a new phase of pursuing my masteròs degree in special education despite my struggles as a childhood cancer patient and the extra barriers this put in front of me as a student.

If I had one message for our Legislature it is this . . . We have so many individuals in our communities who represent the non-typical path toward being positive community members. MSTR is a positive step forward for acknowledging the good work so many neighbors and friends do in our communities. I understand that federal, state and local district coffers are tight. However, when you put forth an investment into people of color and other marginalized members of our community, you get to see the hard work they do.

I hope that more people who are marginalized can provide relevant and accredited instruction to the youth who one day will be teachers. I hope I have been able to empower those students to set high expectations. In the meantime, I hope to challenge all teachers to pursue issues of equity, inclusion, literacy and social-emotional learning. It is in our collective best interest to support education, and alternative pathways like MSTR are a vital means for bringing in non-traditional but exceptional

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teachers who can relate to our current student population.

Please invest in these programs. I don't just say that because this has been a means for me to escape systemic poverty. I say this because I know there are kids who could be amazing teachers if we gave them half a chance.

Thank you for your support for MSTR!

Best wishes,

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