

Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

I am writing in support of HF3251 both as a Board Member of Metro Deaf School (MDS) and as a parent of two MDS students. HF3251 is critical for the ongoing operation of MDS as a school that meets the needs of Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard-of-Hearing (D/DB/HoH) students.

Since its founding in 1993, MDS's mission has always been to meet the needs of D/DB/HoH students. At MDS, all students and staff use American Sign Language (ASL) and students thrive because they have full language access. MDS allows D/DB/HoH students to be with their peers and to have full access to language and information not just from teachers, but everyone in the school. The majority of MDS staff are D/DB/HoH themselves and serve as role models and professional educators and service providers for our students, and all MDS staff members are trained to work with D/DB/HoH students.

My family moved to Minnesota in 2018 primarily for the educational access that MDS provides to D/DB/HoH students. My two daughters (a 6th grader and a 4th grader) are thriving at MDS, in contrast with their previous experiences in schools that did not primarily serve D/DB/HoH students. While the teachers and staff in their former schools were well-intentioned, my daughters were often isolated from peers, missed out on learning and generally did not have full access to school due to lack of ASL access. Since joining MDS, my daughters have been able to have friends, play sports, participate fully in school, and just be kids -- their whole environment is accessible.

I ask that you support HF3251, which specifically clarifies that MDS may continue to serve D/DB/HoH students as it has been doing for almost 30 years.

Thank you.

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