



March 3, 2021

Chair Richardson  
463 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF951 PreK-3 Ban on Dismissals

Dear Chair Richardson and members of the Committee,

As you know, Minnesota's current approach to school discipline simply isn't working, with too many students being pushed out rather than supported to develop the skills they need for long-term success. Moreover, Minnesota has a long-documented history of disproportionately suspending and expelling students of color and students with disabilities,<sup>1</sup> adult actions which have long-term negative consequences. HF951 would help address this.

For our young learners, there is nothing more critical than affirming classrooms that support social emotional development and foundational learning. These years are essential to early literacy in particular. Exclusionary practices take away the very opportunities our students need to learn, develop, and grow. Young students who are suspended or expelled are as much as ten times more likely to drop out of school, experience academic failure and grade retention, have a negative view of school, and face incarceration than those who are not.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, exclusionary discipline practices that remove students from the classroom can hinder their cognitive and social development, particularly for our youngest learners.<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons, EdAllies supports HF951, which would prohibit the dismissals for PreK-3 students, only allowing expulsions and exclusions under rare circumstances after other disciplinary interventions. Across the country, 16 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that limit the use of exclusionary discipline by grade levels, including the early grades.<sup>4</sup> Minnesota should follow suit and protect our youngest learners from exclusionary discipline practices that push them out of school and can lead to negative long-term consequences.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Joshua Crosson  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup>Kaput, K. (July 2019). "For Students of Color With Special Needs, Action on School Discipline is Urgent." EdAllies.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education. (November 2014). "Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings." US HHS & USDE.

<sup>3</sup>Stegelin, D. (December 2018). "Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues." Institute for Child Success.

<sup>4</sup>Rafa, A. (January 2019). "The Status of School Discipline in State Policy." Education Commission of the States.