

Addressing the shortage of special education teachers

Date: March 7, 2023

To: House Taxes
Rep. Aisha Gomez, Chair
Rep. Matt Norris, Vice Chair

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please add special education to fields qualifying for master's degree tax credit – HF2340

The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing urges members of the Taxes committee to support HF2340, which adds special education to the fields qualifying for up to \$2,500 tax credit towards the cost of a master's degree required for teacher licensure.

The shortage of licensed special education teachers has hit especially hard in the deaf or hard of hearing licensure area. The Minnesota Department of Education's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Group has highlighted this shortage repeatedly, most recently on page 12 of their 2022 biennial report to legislators.¹

The Office of Higher Education also lists "Deaf or Hard of Hearing" as a licensure shortage area beginning on page 7 of their 2022 annual report.²

The impact of the pandemic was especially severe for students with disabilities. With the abrupt switch to remote learning, many schools struggled to serve their special education students, especially deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing students.

Metro Deaf School (MDS) was among the, if not the, best equipped to serve their students via remote learning. Transfers from other schools began trickling in. Since June 2020, enrollment at MDS has ballooned by 28%. They now have waiting lists for some of their classes due to insufficient staffing. Yet they have numerous aspiring teachers working as paraprofessionals who cannot become licensed due to the cost of a master's degree.

We are grateful to Representative Ginny Klevorn and Senate Taxes Chair Ann Rest for carrying this bill, along with the many legislators who have co-signed. Thank you for your consideration, and we invite you to join us in addressing the severe special education shortage by voting in support of HF2340.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Lane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "A" and "L".

Alicia Lane

¹ Minnesota Department of Education. *Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Biennial Report to the Legislature: 2022*. <https://www.lrl.mn.gov/docs/2022/mandated/220798.pdf>

² Minnesota Office of Higher Education. *Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program Annual Report: February 1, 2022*. https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/TSLRP_Report2022.pdf