

Written testimony for: House Education Policy Committee remote hearing on March 8, 2021

From: Kelly Kayser, resident of Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

Date: March 7, 2021

RE: Opposition to HR874

I am writing in opposition to HR874. While I understand that those who support the amendment to our state's constitution are motivated by an earnest desire to improve education, I believe that the proposed change in language will not only fail to produce the desired results, it will likely lead to other unintended consequences. Just as the current wording did not create the difficulties faced in delivering education today, the revised language will not resolve those challenges.

The word "quality" as used in the amendment is both vague and subjective, as is the phrase "skills necessary for participation." Making the courts the final authority on what constitutes a quality education or necessary skills shifts power away from those who should be making those decisions — elected officials, local school boards, educators, and parents. It also opens the door for litigation by those who feel the state failed to provide an education of sufficient quality.

The current constitutional language clearly stipulates that the legislature is responsible for providing a "general," "uniform," "thorough," and "efficient" public school system. That language is neither outdated nor inequitable; more importantly, it already allows the state to establish parameters for quality education. As I stated before, a change in wording will do nothing to correct current failures in the system.

I also disagree with the precept of granting children the right to a *public* education. This is vastly different than requiring that all children have equal access to public education. Such language paves the way for requiring that parents only send their children to a public school. My personal experience with public, private, and homeschool settings has allowed me to see the value of choice. Children and their families are not one-size-fits-all, especially when it comes to education. Some children thrive in a public-school setting, while others struggle; some students benefit from the smaller community of a private or parochial school, while still others benefit from the one-on-one instruction of a homeschool or have educational needs that are best met by a specialized school such as Groves Academy or a school for the deaf. Granting the state authority to supersede the loving judgement of a child's parent(s) has the potential to rob many children of the method of quality education that best suits their individual learning needs.

Last year I asked my neighbor, who had recently retired from his decades-long career as a public-school teacher, to share the most notable change he had observed over his many years of teaching. His reply was a decrease in family involvement. Throughout his career, those children whose families were closely involved in their education consistently experienced the most success in school. There is no denying that support at home and success in school are interconnected. Families, in whatever form they take, are the foundational fabric of our society. As such, true advocates for better education must pursue remedies that encourage, equip, and empower families that struggle in supporting their children's education, rather than restricting options for families that are already doing so.

For all of the reasons set forth in this testimony, I strongly encourage you to withdraw or refuse support for HF874, and I thank each of you for your public service to the residents of Minnesota.