



February 23, 2021

Rep. Ruth Richardson
Chair MN House Committee on Education Policy
403 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: House File 950

Dear Chair Richardson and Members of the Committee,

We are pleased with various amendments proposed in HF 950 and commend the authors for advancing equity, justice, and antiracism in schools. Notably, the banning of American Indian mascots, the addition of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports improvement framework, the improvement of disciplinary policies to be less punitive and more restorative, and the inclusion of ethnic studies are important changes. Ethnic studies are crucial to an accurate and liberatory education for our children; this precious knowledge will guide them as they respond to injustice today and in the future. The implementation of policies which require alternative approaches to removing a student from the classroom also have positive impacts on long-term student success and school climate.¹

While we applaud the important gains of HF 950, we urge the committee to consider how certain provisions would steer us in the wrong direction. As it currently stands, our tiered teacher licensure system provides multiple equally-legitimate avenues through which teachers can demonstrate their qualifications and earn permanent licensure. This system is designed to remove barriers which stem from a white supremacist education system privileging certain backgrounds and institutional access while blocking others from entering the teaching profession. In just three years, the tiered licensure system has made immense strides in serving this function and diversifying the teacher workforce, with 21% of teachers who hold a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license identifying as people of color.²

¹ "Fix School Discipline: Toolkit For Community." (2017). Public Counsel.

http://www.fixschooldiscipline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/comm_toolkit_final.pdf

² "2021 Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand Report" Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board. https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021_Final_tcm1113-463801.pdf

The proposed deletion of Lines 45.8-45.11 in HF 950 removes a pathway for Tier 2 license holders who have demonstrated effectiveness with their students and have what it takes to hold a permanent license. We do no favors to our learners by restricting their access to good teachers when Minnesota is facing a crisis in teacher diversity³ and a severe overall teacher shortage.⁴ We urge the committee to restore the original language in Section 7, Subdivision 2.

Both district and charter schools fulfill the diverse educational needs of different learners, and Education Evolving has wonderful change-making stakeholders who work in each of these sectors. It is important that families have access to quality and sustainable learning environments no matter what choice they make for their child's education. We wish to identify the troubling impacts certain provisions could have on our charter school stakeholders and their programs.

First, we feel that allowing the Commissioner of Education to terminate charter authorizers without setting guidelines for decision-making establishes an underdeveloped and cloudy process for such an important issue of authorizer quality. We also feel that the addition of a market demand study requirement poses challenges for our charter school stakeholders while lacking a clear objective for the requirement and missing engagement with community stakeholders. Before moving forward with these provisions, we encourage the committee to devote additional consideration to potential pitfalls.

Sincerely,



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³ Mahamud & Webster. "Minnesota schools struggle with widening racial gap between students and teachers." *Star Tribune*.
<https://www.startribune.com/as-minnesota-students-become-more-diverse-teachers-remain-mostly-white/498947601/>

⁴ Golden. (2021). "Teacher shortage hits schools in rural, urban districts across Minnesota." *Star Tribune*.
<https://www.startribune.com/teacher-shortage-hits-schools-in-rural-urban-districts-across-minnesota/600021093/>