

April 29, 2020

Representative Jim Davnie
Chair of House Education Finance Division
443 State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Chair Davnie:

Our organizations support the Innovation Research Zone (IRZ) bill developed by a group of 25 innovative-thinking superintendents. We would like to thank Representative Sandell, for taking a leadership role in bringing this bill forward and for his commitment to thoughtful, student-centered, innovation in our public school system. Each of our organizations are prepared to provide supportive testimony; however, given the circumstances and timing we hope this letter of strong is equally effective.

Minnesota's schools have responded to this pandemic. School boards, administrators, teachers and staff have quickly planned new ways to provide learning opportunities to Minnesota's students. When this pandemic is behind us, we know they will need to consider other innovations and redesign models. But to create well designed new models, schools need the flexibility and the encouragement the IRZ bill provides. It is likely that "normal" is something that occurred in the past.

The bill is not a mandate. It is revenue neutral. A school is not required to participate. Some of our schools are already planning how the provisions of the IRZ bill can benefit student learning. We support the enactment of the Innovation Research Zone bill this session. The pandemic has demonstrated what our local districts can accomplish and created a new sense of urgency and schools cannot wait to implement.

Thank you for your excellent work this session to help Minnesotans get through this pandemic – it is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Gary Amoroso, PhD
Minnesota Association of School Administrators

Denise Dittrich
Minnesota School Boards Association

Scott Croonquist
Association of Metropolitan School Districts

Fred Nolan, PhD
Minnesota Rural Education Association

Brad Lundell
Schools for Equity in Education

Roger Aronson
MN Elementary School Principals Association
MN Association of Secondary School Principals