



February 15, 2021

Dear Members of the Education Finance Committee:

NAMI Minnesota supports HF 1064 and believes that several provisions will help address the negative impact of the pandemic on our children and youth.

We know that school closures created high stress in many households as parents tried to work and help with distance learning. Children and youth lost their routines and were also isolated from their peers and from other supportive adults. Loss of income and food insecurity added to the stress in many families. On top of this, the access to mental health services was limited for those who could not use telehealth.

In one study they found that 14% of adults reported worsening mental health for their children. The CDC found that ER visits for mental health among children increased 24% for children ages 5-11 and 31% for children 12-17 years old.

Knowing that the mental health of children and youth is worsening, NAMI Minnesota is very supportive of the efforts in HF 1064 to add mental health services and supports, trauma informed practices, mindfulness, and social emotional learning to the various summer school education activities. We are very pleased to also see an additional \$6 million for school-linked mental health services.

School-linked mental health services provide clinical treatment to students who are struggling. This model has been extremely successful in increasing access to mental health treatment, promoting equity, and helping the entire school increase its capacity to meet the needs of students who are struggling with their mental health. It eliminates barriers such as transportation, difficulty navigating the mental health system, taking off work, etc. Prior to the pandemic providers could not meet the needs, with referrals closing out prior to December. Increasing funding will help our providers better meet the needs of students who have especially been impacted by the pandemic.

While everyone is optimistic that once children are back in school everything will be fine. We want to remind the committee that children have experienced a traumatic event. They do not have the "tools" to address the emotions they are experiencing. Coming back into the classroom will not be as easy as people think, and it will not resolve the lingering issues caused by COVID-19. Access to mental health treatment will be needed more than ever. Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director



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February 16, 2021

TO: Members
House Education Finance Committee

FROM: Brad Lundell
Executive Director, Schools for Equity in Education

RE: Support for HF 1064

Schools for Equity in Education (SEE) strongly supports HF 1064, Representative Davnie's bill that would Implement a variety of funding mechanisms to address both district revenue shortfalls and student learning challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of particular interest to SEE is Section 4 of the bill that provides relief for districts that have experienced declining enrollment as a result of the pandemic. School districts throughout the state could not anticipate enrollment changes attributable to the changes to education service delivery that were initiated prior to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Testimony has been provided previously in this committee pointing out the fiscal challenges that have emerged because of the drop-off in expected enrollment. Section 4 would help mitigate this revenue loss.

SEE also supports other aspects of this bill and urges its prompt consideration by the Legislature. In addition to addressing the funding shortfall experienced by districts due to enrollment loss, HF 1064 seeks to provide meaningful student support programs that will help address the delay in learning so many students have experienced and deal with mental health issues that have arisen for both students and staff. Because these programs would be implemented in the interim between the end of the current school year and the advent of the 2021-2022 school year, school districts need ample planning time to make certain these programs deliver the maximum benefit. As stated above, to ensure this outcome, HF 1064 will hopefully be passed relatively early this session.

The organization thanks Representative Davnie for introducing this bill and thanks this committee for giving it consideration. If you have any questions regarding SEE's position on this and other issues, do not hesitate to contact me at brad.lundell@schoolsforequity.org or (651) 647-6251/(612) 220-7459.

SEE Districts

- Albany
- Albert Lea
- Annandale
- Anoka-Hennepin
 - Austin
 - Belle Plaine
 - Big Lake
 - Braham
- Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose
 - Byron
- Cambridge-Isanti
 - Cannon Falls
 - Centennial
- Chisago Lakes
- Dassel-Cokato
 - Delano
 - East Central
 - Faribault
 - Forest Lake
 - Fridley
 - Hastings
- Hinckley-Finlayson
- Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted
 - Hutchinson
 - Jordan
- Kasson-Mantorville
 - Kimball
 - Lake City
 - Litchfield
 - Maple Lake
 - Medford
 - Melrose
 - Milaca
 - Monticello
 - Mora
- New London-Spicer
 - New Prague
 - North Branch
 - Northfield
 - Owatonna
 - Paynesville
 - Pine Island
 - Princeton
- Prior Lake-Savage
 - Rockford
 - Rocori
 - Roseau
- Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan
 - Royalton
 - Rush City
- Sartell-St. Stephen
 - St. Francis
- St. Michael-Albertville
 - Stewartville
 - Stillwater
 - Waconia
- Associate Members
- Resource Training and Solutions
- St. Croix River Education District
- SW Metro Intermediate District



The Pandemic Strikes:

The sudden COVID-19 pandemic forced ABE to convert all classes from in-person to virtual overnight. Over 60,000 adult learners and over 1,350 staff needed to quickly learn to function online. The Digital Divide, now a chasm, was quickly apparent - many low-income students lacked devices, WiFi, and digital literacy skills.

A solid funding base, an ABE culture built to foster creativity and inclusion, and strong support from the Minnesota Department of Education and Distance Learning Support Services allowed rapid, creative responses. Programs adapted quickly, finding ways and means to serve adult learners effectively in a fast changing, unpredictable environment. Efforts to provide devices, WiFi, and digital literacy skills ramped up. **Within a short time, ABE was functional in a radically changed environment.**

55,600+ students were served over the program year, a drop of only 5,000 from the previous year - a remarkable achievement in a deeply disrupted environment.

Major Innovations:

- Staff learned to do more at a distance, and found ways to develop virtual community for learners and themselves.
- Remote testing was developed for GED, Northstar Digital Literacy, and other services.
- The professional development system pivoted quickly to provide the online training and support needed in the new environment.
- ABE programs began distributing crucial technology for students (and staff), including laptops, tablets, and hotspots.
- Greater awareness of and collaboration with other systems occurred. At the national level, previous Minnesota innovations, such as a focused intensive professional development system, and the Northstar digital literacy assessment and curricula, achieved widespread use.

What We Learned:

Programs realized there were people the 'old' in-class model didn't serve, who are now (and hopefully in the future) better served at a distance. At the same time, some who had been served previously did not continue in the new paradigm, often due to the challenges of the digital divide. Everyone realized being in a physical classroom was not required in order to learn. Going into a crisis, a creative and innovative mindset helps people adapt to rapid and even traumatic change. And, **the ABE system is a crucial resource system for many, perhaps most, especially during times of rapid change.**



ABE Voices Across the Distance: How are MN Adult Educators responding?

Jessica Jones – Open Door Learning Center, St. Paul:



When I found out that the school would be closed (for a long time), I stayed up way too late one night putting together a class website. I wanted to have a landing page for everything that my students are working on. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I have a two-hour block of office hours that's open for one-on-one video conferencing. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday we do group lessons online with Zoom.

The thing that I'm particularly proud of is that I actually have more students on my roster now than I did when we closed. I was able to re-engage some students who had been home with infants or had other situations where they couldn't come to class.

Emphasize connection over academic goals. It's important to work to establish connection with all of your students first. The first couple of weeks I just made calls and sent messages asking people how they were doing, if they had enough food, if everyone in their family was healthy. That initial connection was crucial to keeping everyone engaged. Also, pick one thing that you're going to do and get good at that. You can add to it later; it doesn't have to be perfect right away.

Liv Musel-Staloch - Mankato Area Adult Education:

Our program is considered middle-sized in the state. We had five levels of ESL instruction happening, plus GED and adult diploma preparation classes. We were able to move all of our 'core' leveled ESL classes online, as well as some additional classes. Our ABE classes use Google Meet/Hangout for video lessons.

Teachers are focused on the basics: reading, vocabulary, listening comprehension, math operations. Many teachers are offering health and community resources to contextualize the learning and provide much-needed support to students. They're also trying to be a "safe place" for students, checking in on how people are doing, providing suggestions for parents with children at home, offering ways to get food or jobs that are hiring.

Some students are getting online with us at 8:00 in the morning and staying on until 3:00 in the afternoon. Teachers are also struggling to reach students who haven't been able to connect to online learning yet. We worry about our students who have limited access to internet or devices.

Pamela Dane – WEST ABE (Monticello, Big Lake, and St. Michael-Albertville):

Teaching online is completely different than teaching in a classroom. I had to do a few ESL classes online to realize that I couldn't replicate what I did in the classroom, where I try to have the students talk as much as possible while reducing my teacher talk. In video meetings, you can't do mingles or multiple conversation partners at the same time. Learning to teach online is a humbling experience. You have to be able to laugh at yourself. Most importantly, listen to the students.

Address their well-being needs first. Learn one platform and just go with it. Start small, but jump in; nothing will be perfect when you start. Be willing to change strategies after each class session.

Connect with other teachers; we all need moral support right now. And don't give up on the synchronous online lessons; I can see that the students really miss their friends from class, and for some it is the only connection they have outside of their home.



LITERACY ACTION NETWORK

ADVOCATING FOR MINNESOTA ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

The LAN Board has adopted a 2021 legislative platform designed to stabilize financial resources to serve Adult Basic Education (ABE) students in Minnesota. The platform was developed over several months of thought and feedback from the LAN Membership throughout the state and consideration by the LAN Legislative Committee.

LAN INITIATIVES:

INCREASE ABE FUNDING ANNUALLY BASED ON THE PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE THAT K-12 RECEIVES.

Since 2001, ABE funding state-wide has remained flat, while the inflation rate from 2001 to 2020 was 47%. This has caused a significant decrease in funding to support ABE services statewide. Costs have continued to go up, and have escalated further due to COVID 19. While K12 and ECFE receive an annual percentage funding increase, ABE does not. The proposed platform addresses this shortfall by increasing resources for all ABE consortia.

PROVIDE \$2M IN SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING TO COVER ADDITIONAL TECHNOLOGY EXPENSES RELATED TO COVID 19.

The pandemic has created many challenges and additional costs for ABE, as all classes changed to a virtual format. New costs include specialized professional development for teachers, purchasing devices for low income adult learners, expenses to access online platforms, etc. Targeted funding is requested to cover these additional expenses.

LAN SUPPORTS:

EFFORTS BY THE COALITION TO INCREASE TEACHERS OF COLOR AND AMERICAN INDIAN TEACHERS TO EXPAND RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONG PUBLIC MINNESOTA SCHOOL TEACHERS.

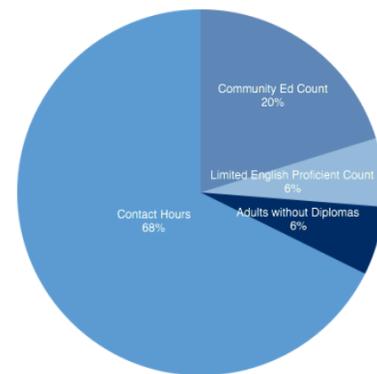
LAN will monitor discussion regarding pay equity between K-12 and ABE or ECFE teacher contracts for licensed teachers and the potential impacts to services available. New funding should accompany any such policy change, to cover increased costs.

ABE Day at the Capitol! Students and ABE staff from throughout MN will be meeting with their local legislators at the Minnesota State Capitol. Please join us! Date to be announced.

BACKGROUND: THERE ARE FOUR PRIMARY COMPONENTS TO THE ABE FORMULA:

1. Contact Hour Aid, based on the number of student contact hours at each consortia
2. Total population in the service area of each school district consortia
3. Number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the service area of each school district
4. Number of adults 25 and older without a secondary credential in the service area of each school district

Formula Distribution of ABE Funding



In 2019-2020, 60,320 students accessed services at 41 Consortia throughout MN generating 4,470,192 contact hours statewide.

ABE Enrollees Served

