



January 23, 2023

The purpose of this letter is to offer support for HF345.

The diversity of Minnesota and its schools is something for our state to be proud of. From the metro to outstate, urban to suburban, traditional public to charter public, our state's schools, and their needs, are as diverse as the students that attend them. The continued use of a "one size fits all" approach to measure the success of Minnesota's public schools doesn't work.

Current school accountability systems, based on proficiency on standardized tests and 4 year graduation rates serve the purpose of ranking and labeling schools. The systems in place assume each student in Minnesota enters a traditional public school with grade level appropriate skills and zero risk factors that would preclude them from regular attendance and participation in school coursework. These accountability systems ignore the reality facing many schools across Minnesota, especially in marginalized, diverse communities. Students are subject to the same societal ills as the populous. Our students bring trauma, food insecurity, language barriers, homelessness and education gaps into schools with them. Public schools in Minnesota, traditional and charter, reflect the communities they serve. Accountability systems that label schools as "comprehensive support" ie, "failing", perpetuate the harmful narrative that the students who attend them (predominantly Black, Brown, and Indigenous) are failures.

Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) leadership in piloting an "Equity Framework" for its secondary schools moves away from the use of deficit language and instead identifies and highlights success and success indicators when serving the most vulnerable children in the state of Minnesota. This alternative framework for school accountability, built with and for our students, families, and community, values growth over time, engaging activities and experiences for students, and preparation for life beyond high school. This bill would allow interested schools to be held accountable to a meaningful system that is relevant and responsive to the students that actually come through our doors.

School accountability needs to change to meet the reality of the students that we serve. HF345 is a step in the direction of recognizing that education in Minnesota is not "one size fits all". Nuance and flexibility is required to measure the actual effectiveness of schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn Fondow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shawn Fondow
Executive Director
Minnesota Transitions Charter School