

March 6, 2021

Dear MN House Committee Members,

My name is Erin Bell. I am a mother of three young children and a concerned Minnesota citizen. I am writing regarding the proposed MN Constitutional Amendment HF 874 seeking to make quality public education a fundamental right of a child. While I absolutely want quality public education, I am concerned with the wording of making PUBLIC education a specified right without any mention or stipulations made for educational choice such as homeschool or private school. I ask that you please consider the wording carefully and how this may impact educational choice and parental rights in MN. As it currently reads, I am opposed to HF 874.

The amendment states: "All children have a fundamental right to a quality public education".

While I believe all children have a fundamental right to a quality public education and with equal access for those who wish to partake, I also believe there are multiple education options that are high quality and the right should be reserved to the families to choose which mode is right for them. The phrasing here codifying PUBLIC education as a fundamental right creates an exclusive path to be argued against private and home education options as they are not public or controlled by the state- and nor should they be!

The amendment states: "that fully prepares them with the skills necessary for participation in the economy, our democracy, and society"

This proposed amendment strikes out reference to us as a Republican government and replaces it with democracy. We are not a direct democracy but a constitutional republic. This wording should be corrected.

The amendment states: "It is a paramount duty of the state to ensure quality public schools that fulfill this fundamental right."

The state does have a duty to provide quality schools as one option to fulfill this right for education. But we must be clear that it is not the only option. The education of children is a duty that resides first with parents; the state's job is to provide resources, such as quality public schools, for those families who choose to use them.

I am concerned that amending the Minnesota Constitution in this way serves as a route to potentially limit freedom of school choice. Parental rights and an open market for educational options are the best answer to being able to select what is best for each individual student.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration!

Respectfully,  
Erin Bell, 55054