



March 3, 2021

To: Chair Davnie and Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Matt Shaver, EdAllies Policy Director

Re: Support for HF649 Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Partnership

Dear Chair Davnie and members of the Committee,

We are writing in support of HF 649, which would increase access to rigorous, college preparatory coursework for high school students in all corners of the state by providing necessary training for concurrent enrollment teachers. Despite the importance of the program, staff training requirements present a major barrier to sustaining and expanding the program.

Concurrent enrollment—also known as “College in the Schools”—is the second largest rigorous coursework program in the state, with 30,000 students enrolled in 2018. It allows high school students to take college courses during the regular school day, with classes taught by either qualified high school teachers or college faculty on the high school campus. Students earn both high school and college credit directly upon successful completion of the course, instead of through a high-stakes assessment like in AP or IB.

In 2015, the Higher Learning Commissioner (HLC), the region’s postsecondary accreditation group, clarified the rules around who is eligible to teach concurrent enrollment courses. Specifically, high school teachers who teach concurrent enrollment must meet the same minimum qualifications as college faculty. This change was controversial because it meant that many high school teachers could no longer lead instruction: 76% of high school staff teaching concurrent enrollment in Minnesota will be disqualified without further graduate education.¹ Despite significant pushback, HLC does not plan to amend the rule.

To address this change, in 2016 the Minnesota Legislature allocated \$3 million on a one-time basis for the Northwest Regional Partnership—a voluntary association of Lakes Country Service Cooperative, Northwest Service Cooperative, and Minnesota Statute University-Moorhead—to develop opportunities for concurrent enrollment teachers to earn additional graduate-level credentials in their subject area. So far, 605 teachers from 196 districts across Minnesota have enrolled in the program.²

The bill reinvests in this important strategy, and expands who can be in the partnership so that more teachers can gain access to the training. This reinvestment and expansion is essential to ensuring that Minnesota’s students can maintain access to concurrent enrollment programming, and I urge the committee to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Shaver".

Matt Shaver

Policy Director

mshaver@edalliesmn.org

¹ Education Minnesota, the Minnesota State College Faculty, the Inter-Organization Faculty, and Minnesota State. (2016). White Paper: Concurrent Enrollment Comprehensive Plan for Program Sustainability and for Instructors Meeting Minimum Faculty Qualifications.

²Kovash, J. (2020). Regional Partnership: Concurrent Enrollment Teacher Training Program Report to the Legislature. Lakes Country Service Cooperative.