

Virtual Testimony Re: HF874 by Kay Milbrath, 5128 Eastwood Rd, Mounds View, MN 55112, Ph. 763-783-0137

After having visited on the phone with one of the authors of HF874, it is clear that while the authors believe that the current educational wording is vague and inadequate to insure quality and needs to be changed, I continue to believe that changing the wording to “All” students and “quality education” as a “paramount responsibility of the state,” is not better for the following reasons:

- 1) Provides no protection to private and homeschooled students. This is a proposed constitutional amendment; therefore, laws protecting private schools and home schools could be deemed unconstitutional or cause legal paralyzing wrangling should HF874 pass. I don't know if Supreme Court precedent will completely prevent this.
- 2) Quality is only as good as the persons who determine it. It is impossible to judge a quality education by standardized test scores, but if it were, how does one know that the standardized tests themselves are “quality”? And what is quality to one side of the aisle politically (since this is a constitutional amendment and affects actions of the current elected legislature) may not be quality to the other side; therefore, whoever is in legislative power at the time the quality is judged will get to determine the quality of a student's education. Some legislators believe that teaching activism and examining sexual thoughts of students is quality. Some legislators believe that teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic is quality. There is simply no way to guarantee a quality education without further defining what quality is, in a bipartisan way and how to hold accountable those who determine it. The proposed constitutional change is just as vague as the current wording. I believe Nancy Pelosi was wrong when she said the ACA had to be passed in order to see what was in it. That is what legislators are attempting now, without defining what quality is in this amendment. I believe our students and parents, whether homeschooled, private schooled, or public schooled deserve better than that.
- 3) Back to standardized testing. Some children were born able to take tests well, so to speak. Some children were not—perhaps they show what they have learned by demonstrating they can do the task. Some children can represent themselves better orally than in written format. The administration, teachers, parents and students can work together to achieve what is the best indicator for an individual student, rather than a state board. Some school districts are strong because the administrations and teachers and parents and students are strong. This should be encouraged, not tossed aside in favor of vague quality that means different things to different legislators and different public education leaders.
- 4) What does the Federal Reserve Bank have to do with determining educational law and constitutional amendments?

That is why, for a state constitution, the word adequate is adequate. It is at the local, community, and family level that standards should be in place and when standards are not met, improvements must be made. Study good districts where students are moving on to successful college careers, successful jobs, successful community involvement, successful military and volunteer service and if quality can be clearly defined in a bipartisan way after that intensive study, then talk about changing the constitutional wording.