

February 25, 2023

Chairperson Cwodzinski and Colleagues:

My son, Henry, is a student at Metro Deaf School, a free public charter school in Saint Paul. Henry is a delightfully funny and sweet boy who is hard-of-hearing and nonverbal secondary to his diagnosis of Cornelia de Lange Syndrome. He has been thriving in this ASL environment from the time he started at the age of 2 ½ to now as an 11 year-old boy. After much research into schools and services in the San Francisco Bay Area where Henry was born, we realized there was no school that could offer what MDS has. Moving from California to Minnesota for Henry to attend MDS has been one of the best decisions we could make as his parents. His communication and personality have flourished in a way that would not have been possible with the limited services available in California. Although schools for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students exist in California, they were not prepared to work with children with other needs. Attending MDS is giving Henry and opportunity to reach his full potential as a contributing member of society and has provided a community of support for Henry that is invaluable to him now and will continue to be for the rest of his life.

MDS serves Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard-of-hearing students from 0 to 21 years old from over 35 school districts. MDS welcomes Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing students with other unique learning needs as well. Henry along with several of his peers has unique learning needs including Autism Spectrum Disorder and Developmental Disability. Having an environment where everyone uses ASL allows Henry to have unlimited access to peers and adults. He can benefit from watching two teachers sign to each other when planning an activity or problem solving. He has access to all the incidental learning hearing children have in school. As a parent I believe it is critical for MDS to remain a Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing school servicing the Twin Cities area and beyond.

MDS is the primary reason why I relocated my family here from California and I urge you to support this amendment to maintain MDS as a school supporting Deaf, Deafblind and hard-of-hearing children.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathleen McKenna

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