



February 5, 2023

The Honorable Aric Putnam  
95 University Avenue West  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3215  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Putnam and Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of SF 494 (Putnam).

The Minnesota Business Partnership is comprised of 110 CEOs and senior leaders from Minnesota's largest employers. Since the Business Partnership was formed in 1977, one of our primary objectives has been to ensure Minnesotans are well-prepared for careers in the global economy.

There is great concern about how recent challenges are impacting Minnesota students and our state's potential for future economic growth. Student achievement dropped precipitously during the pandemic, and students reporting mental health issues increased significantly.

Addressing these dual challenges is critical to helping students recover and thrive – and the BARR Center is leading the way through strategies designed to improve academic, and social and emotional outcomes for every student. Using a robust relationship-building model and real-time student data, the BARR program's student-centric model has been proven to enhance student achievement, increase teacher collaboration, and reduce chronic absenteeism.

The bill under consideration would increase the BARR Center's ability to offer programs to additional communities and students throughout Minnesota. Investing in the expansion of the BARR model will greatly benefit thousands of additional students – at a time when they need academic, and social and emotional support the most.

The members of the Minnesota Business Partnership commend the work underway at the BARR Center, and we encourage members of the Senate Education Finance Committee to support expansion through SF 494.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amy Walstien'.

Senior Policy Director  
Education and Workforce Development  
Minnesota Business Partnership