

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus*

*Department of Organizational Leadership,  
Policy, and Development  
College of Education and Human Development*

*206 Burton Hall  
178 Pillsbury Drive S.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612-624-1006  
Fax: 612-624-3377  
E-mail: [olpd@umn.edu](mailto:olpd@umn.edu)  
Website: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/olpd>*

Bhaskar Upadhyay, Professor, College of Education and Human Development,  
University of Minnesota

Re: Legislative Testimony  
SF2350 (Kunesh)/ HF2626 (Hill/Kraft)

Dear Chair and Members,

I am writing in support of the SF2350 (Kunesh)/ HF2626 (Hill/Kraft) bills for an act relating to education finance; appropriating money for the Minnesota GreenStep Schools program. I am Bhaskar Upadhyay, a Professor of STEM Education and Comparative International and Development Education at the University of Minnesota in Twin Cities. My work is built on providing STEM teachers with the best pedagogical resources, materials, and skills so our students get the best education they deserve. Additionally, I explore how the 21<sup>st</sup> Century STEM education best prepares our students to tackle the most challenging and gnarly questions related to the environment that would benefit the community at large. We urgently need programs that push our students to reflect on our actions and their potential implications for them as individuals, their families, their communities, and beyond.

In this regard, GreenStep Schools Program provides this new space for our rural, suburban, and urban schools to support our students to broaden their engagement with STEM and non-STEM fields for a healthy climate. Furthermore, this program could act as a pivotal layer to encourage students to examine the local and global issues related to energy security, food security, water security, and many other issues by utilizing STEM ideas learned in STEM classrooms. These extended interactions have great potential to build critical thinking skills and narrow the achievement gaps among our students. According to the 2019 report titled "Statewide Crisis: Minnesota's Education Achievement Gaps," published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, the achievement gaps in math, science, and language are persistent and affect rural and urban communities equally. GreenStep Schools Programs could be a potential partner in narrowing this perennial gap.

GreenStep Schools Programs can work with schools and the community to bring additional curricular and other resources to build more hands-on and minds-on activities and locally relevant contents that makes learning relevant. In addition, GreenStep Schools Program promotes youth-led activities and actions based on community needs benefitting both the students and the community. GreenStep Schools Programs is also a repository space where stories of youth-led activities and actions are collected and shared across the Minnesota schools. These stories then become exemplars and models for other schools and youths to lead their own activities based on their local community environments. Therefore, the program could be an excellent opportunity to build leadership capacities in our youths from an early age. In Minnesota, we need youth leaders who later become climate leaders for the wellbeing of Minnesota and its communities.

I strongly support the GreenStep Schools Program because it has the potential to contribute to a brighter future for the students of Minnesota and its communities. I sincerely request the honorable members of this committee to support this program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Bhaskar Upadhyay

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bhaskar Upadhyay', with a horizontal line underneath.

Bhaskar Upadhyay, Ph.D.

Professor

Comparative International Development Education

STEM Education