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Re: SF 3731 - North Star state education accountability plan amendment provision

Dear Members of the Senate Education Policy Committee,

For over one hundred years, the Minnesota PTA has supported and advocated for parents, students, and educators across the state. We currently have over two hundred local units in Minnesota with 4,000 members representing all forms of schools, including rural, suburban, urban, district, and charter. The Minnesota PTA is a state congress of the National PTA, the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation, with over 20,000 local units in all fifty states.

The mission of the PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Minnesota PTA strongly supports SF 3731, which changes the calculation of Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) results to exclude the scores of zero for students who do not participate or "opt-out". Schools and school district academic achievement data should not be negatively affected by the zero scores currently assigned to students who do not participate in the testing.

Both the National PTA and Minnesota PTA believe that high-quality assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and school leaders about the growth and achievement of their students. However, data that averages in a value of zero for students who do not participate in the test provides incomplete and misleading results that could misinform teaching and learning, misrepresent gaps among groups of students within a school and school district, and affect decisions to ensure students and schools are receiving the necessary resources and supports in order to be successful.

Minnesota PTA encourages the legislature to empower the Minnesota Department of Education to collect data on the number and frequency of students who opt-out of state assessments and evaluate the impact to instructional practices, teacher and principal evaluations, and school accountability measures, and how families and students could be better encouraged to participate in these annual assessments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Nelson
President, Minnesota PTA

Cathy Nathan
Advocacy Commissioner, Minnesota PTA