

March 10, 2024

Senator Steve Cwodzinski
Chair, Minnesota Senate Education Policy Committee
MINNESOTA SENATE
Room 3207, MN Senate Office Building
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: S.F 3731, NORTH STAR PLAN CALCULATIONS

Dear Senator Cwodzinski:

As members of the Legislative Committee of the Rochester School Board, Rochester Public Schools, ISD #535, we are writing to you in support of S.F. 3731, North Star Plan Calculations. We strongly support modifying the reporting of Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments to remove scores from students who opt out of testing.

Like other Districts, RPS encourages students to participate in annual testing. However, we also recognize families and students opt out of annual testing for a variety of personal reasons. Within RPS, some families make the decision to opt out of testing due to critical and individualized concerns such as overall mental health or student anxiety, prioritizing the student's mental health over participation in a standardized test. Other families opt out to send a unified message that their family prioritizes time spent learning in the classroom over statewide standardized testing. Still other families prioritize and balance the demands of other important academic outcomes, including students who are focused on Advanced Placement (AP) courses, similar high-stakes exams or Post-secondary Education Option (PSEO) coursework.

RPS supports improving the accuracy of reporting student testing data. We believe in it is more accurate to report student testing data as "not participating" for students who do not participate, rather than recording opt-out scores as "failing to meet standards". "Not participating" in testing and not even receiving a score is simply not the data equivalent of taking a test and receiving a score classified as "failing to meet standards." District data, scores and rating report cards should not include the students' "scores" for those students and families who decide to exercise their legal and allowable right to opt out of receiving a score on standardized testing.

Thank you for considering our input as you debate and discuss this important education policy bill.

Sincerely,

Rochester School Board, Legislative Committee

Dr. Jessica Garcia
Karen MacLaughlin
Julie Workman

cc: Senator Mary Kunesch, Senator Liz Boldon