

April 15, 2024

Senator Mary Kunesh
Chair, Education Finance Committee
Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Kunesh,

Thank you for including SF3746 in your omnibus Education Finance bill to ensure students across Minnesota will have the opportunity to learn what they need to grow up safe, healthy, and confident. The Women's Foundation of Minnesota, is a 40 year old state-wide community foundation committed to advancing gender equity and supporting initiatives that allow women and girls to be healthy, successful, and safe.

We believe policy and programs should be built on data – that's why we conduct research every two years with the Humphrey School to understand what's happening in Minnesota. And, unfortunately, we know from our research that students across Minnesota are facing a lot -- including preventable negative health and safety outcomes. For example, the research indicates that broad health education is needed to address serious health concerns. The data in this report illustrates the need for a consistent health standard across the state of Minnesota to ensure that students have what they need to make healthy choices:

- Minnesota's 9th grade girls (60%) are almost twice as likely to have serious attempts at suicide than boys (34%).
- Sixteen percent (16%) of 11th grade girls report sexual abuse.
- The 10 places with the highest teen birth rates are all in Greater MN.
- 1 in 2 (52%) of LGTB + students experience at least one form of discrimination which has increased since 2019 (31%).
- Teen girls are less likely to be physically active and participate in sports – essential to their health and wellbeing - than their male counterparts.

We also support this bill because it will use a rulemaking process where students, parents, teachers, health professionals, and other interested parties can engage in a transparent process through the department of education to create a recommended standard.

Minnesota youth deserve health education that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their bodies and health-related choices. With a statewide health education standard, students across the state will have access to the same comprehensive knowledge about issues that affect their daily lives.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez, President and CEO
Women's Foundation of Minnesota