



February 28th, 2025

Members of the Minnesota Education Finance Committee,

The Minnesota School Psychologist Association (MSPA) is submitting this letter of written testimony in support of SF 1667. MSPA would like to thank Senator Hoffman for introducing this bill. We feel strongly that this bill is critical in supporting our schools to effectively meet the needs of every student in Minnesota. Addressing issues related to Developmental Delay is a top priority of our organization and we strongly support this bill.

At this time, in the state of Minnesota, A child up to age 7 (but no younger than 3 years of age) who is experiencing a measurable delay in development according to diagnostic instruments and procedures is eligible to receive special education services under the Developmental Delay (DD) disability category. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states that adopt the developmental delay category may apply it to children aged three through nine.

According to the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children, disability eligibility categories used for older school-aged children are often inappropriate for young children (Developmental Delay as an Eligibility Category, DEC Concept Paper, 2009) for a variety of reasons (e.g., available standardized assessments, etc.). This identification of young children can result in premature categorization or miscategorization, which ultimately can result in misallocation of resources, and inappropriate service provision that directly impacts those students. Therefore, **DEC recommends that a DD category of eligibility be available for all children through age eight.** The DEC cites the following evidence to support this recommendation, including but not limited to the following:

- The period of childhood development typically characterized as early childhood is birth through age 8.
- The reliability and validity of standardized and norm-referenced assessments for diagnostic categories for young children are problematic across these younger ages, resulting in miscategorization and inefficient services.

Relatedly, extending the age for DD from 7 to 9 (or through age 8) in the state of Minnesota would not prohibit multidisciplinary teams from identifying a student's eligibility under a different disability category if there is appropriate data and information to suggest that the student formerly receiving support under DD would benefit more from a different disability category.

Given this, MSPA is supportive of SF 1667 as it allows for necessary changes to be made to DD eligibility.

Lastly, as critical members of multidisciplinary teams determining special education eligibility for our students, we ask consideration for School Psychologists be included in this workgroup. School Psychologists receive extensive training in learning, behavioral science, and mental health to support student academic, social, emotional, and behavioral well being. As such, their perspective will contribute significantly to the progress of this work group.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration of these urgent issues facing Minnesota's schools.

Respectfully,

Sarah Wollersheim Shervey, MSPA Legislative Chair
Jessie Kember, President, MSPA

cc: Brad Lundell