

Testimony about SF 1740 at the Senate Education Policy Committee, March 25, 2025.

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Chair Cwodzinski and members of the committee, I am John Olson from Lakeville, a board member of the Minnesota Science Teachers Association. I recently retired from the Minnesota Department of Education, where I was the Science Specialist for 12 years.

The Minnesota Science Teachers Association board opposes the proposed HF 1306 lines 3.13-3.18. These additions to the credit equivalence statute 120B.024 Subd. 2 would allow a health science class to be considered a science credit, giving students and schools the false impression that they are fulfilling the science graduation requirements through a health course.

The graduation requirements in statute 120B.024 Subd. 1 specify that students must meet the following requirements.

three credits of science, including one credit to satisfy all the earth and space science standards for grades 9 through 12, one credit to satisfy all the life science standards for grades 9 through 12, and one credit to satisfy all the chemistry or physics standards for grades 9 through 12;

It is essential to note that these requirements include 3 credits and the fulfillment of the associated standards. These standards are based on science education research about the concepts and skills that all students need to be college— and career-ready, as well as accomplished citizens. The committee that developed the standards included representatives from colleges, K-12 educators, and industry.

The graduation requirements include

credits sufficient to satisfy the state standards in health upon adoption of statewide rules for implementing health standards. *Minn. Stat. 120B.024 Subd. 1*

Hence, there is no need to consider a health course as a science credit.

Any additional health science courses would need to be considered electives, rather than science credits. They would not meet all the science standards in one

of the three specified areas of the science graduation requirements. There is no benefit to referring to them as science credits; students may falsely assume that they fulfill science graduation requirements through health courses.

This situation is similar to other courses that schools offer as electives, which do not fulfill science graduation requirements, such as natural resource conservation, agriculture, anatomy and physiology, and crime scene investigation.

We want all our students to be exposed to high-quality science learning, which includes developing science knowledge and skills such as conducting investigations, analyzing data, solving scientific problems, and drawing conclusions from evidence. This requires teachers to possess strong content knowledge, effective science pedagogy, and an understanding of students' developmental processes. Specialized health education courses in high schools are often taught by community experts who lack some of these qualifications.

We urge the committee to consider the needs of our students and provide them with a well-rounded science education to prepare them for their futures and the needs of our state.

Thank you.