



April 29, 2025

Chair Marty and Senate Finance Committee Members,

I joined MDE as the Commissioner in 2023, and when entering my tenure, we had the goal of stable and smart investments in our state's public education system. Together, we passed important legislation in 2023 and 2024, and the state significantly progressed on a range of critical education programs on behalf of Minnesota students, educators, families, schools, and communities.

We entered the 2025 legislative session building off the work we accomplished together in 2023 and 2024, with a continued focus on ensuring a measured and responsible approach to investing in our state's public education system. The proposals laid out in the Governor's education budget bill addressed this and maintained our priorities to fund Minnesota's public education system on behalf of our students and educators while responsibly balancing our state's budget.

Thank you, Senator Kunesh, for including many of the funding proposals from the Governor's budget, including continued investments in the school unemployment aid for hourly school workers. And although different than the Governor's approach, we appreciate that the bill also addresses the compensatory formula funding and the compensatory revenue working group. We have heard from districts across the state that this formula requires a modification, and we are appreciative that this bill includes an approach to addressing this formula and look forward to the continued collaboration towards a solution.

We are also appreciative of several other provisions regarding adjustments to the student support personnel aid distribution ensuring we can provide cooperatives with stable and predictable aid and for providing critical investments in MDE's mission and capacity to support Minnesota's students, educators, and schools. Adjustments to MDE's achievement and integration (A&I) administrative set aside will help increase MDE's capacity to effectively support our LEAs' A&I efforts. Investments in our Office of Inspector General, legal support for our nutrition and charter programs, and financial analysis software are critical components of the Governor's anti-fraud and program integrity package. Resources and funding for legal services costs will ensure adequate support for litigation that the agency is managing on behalf of the State and ensure the agency has legal counsel to provide top fiscal and legal accountability and customer experience.

We would like to make the committee aware of our primary concern that we have in the bill. In a year where we are faced with difficult decisions of finding balanced long-term solutions to our budget, we must also maintain the important strides we have made in 2023 and 2024.

One of the key fundamental investments we passed in 2023 included the automatic inflator for the general education formula, an essential funding stream school districts across the state have asked for. This funding provides more assurance for our schools that additional flexible funding for all programming will come each year. By including the inflator for two years, eliminating it in 2028 and 2029, and then adding it

once more, we are creating a precedent of unpredictable and volatile funding for our schools for future legislatures to enact. This pause to funding also moves us away from a permanent solution to our budget. We strongly encourage the Senate to reconsider the elimination of this necessary funding that will fundamentally change how we support our students, educators, and schools beginning next fiscal year. We also continue to have concerns with a few other provisions in the bill including reducing all required sign offs from the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee when a district seeks to carry forward American Indian Education aid.

Once more we are appreciative of this bill incorporating many of the Governor's proposals. With less than a month left in this session, we are committed to the work ahead of us and the partnership we have built over the years to accomplish our goal of a measured and responsible approach of investing in our state's public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Willie Jett II", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Willie Jett II

Commissioner

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