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March 3, 2025

To: Chair Kunesh and members of the Senate Education Finance Committee

From: Sabrina Williams, Executive Director

Chair Kunesh and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Excell Academy Full Service Community School to express our strong support for SF 2007. This bill makes several critical policy changes that the Minnesota Full-Service Community Schools Network has identified as necessary to realize the spirit of the original bill passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 2023. Approximately 55 schools submitted applications for the most recent state-funded FSCS grant in early 2024 and 25 were awarded. Given that districts were limited to applying for only three schools, we believe there is a stronger level of interest across the state in this evidence-based student success strategy. This current bill proposes additional funding to support and sustain approximately 60 new and existing FSCS across Minnesota with the potential to support approximately 24,000 youth and their families.

Full-Service Community Schools combine evidence driven strategies that are designed to support both student and family success. FSCS sites offer community service partnerships, family and community engagement, enriched and extended learning, and foster collaborative and community-based leadership. Effective sites serve rural, suburban, and metro areas schools across Minnesota.

As the Founder and Executive Director of Excell Academy, I have witnessed firsthand how this model transforms lives by addressing both academic and non-academic barriers to student success.

At Excell Academy, FSCS funding has allowed us to expand critical services that go far beyond traditional classroom instruction. We provide access to mental health support, after-school enrichment, family engagement programs, and essential resources such as food assistance and housing support. For many of our students who come from diverse and economically challenged backgrounds these services are not just beneficial; they are vital.

Our community in Brooklyn Park faces unique challenges, including high rates of economic insecurity and systemic educational disparities. Through the FSCS model, we have been able to build partnerships with local organizations, ensuring that families receive wraparound support that meets their needs. The impact is clear: increased student attendance, improved academic outcomes, and stronger family engagement.

We recognize that this is a difficult budget year and that only a select few funding bills will pass. However, investing in FSCS is a direct investment in Minnesota's future workforce, economy, and social well-being. The return on this investment is substantial—when we remove barriers to learning, students thrive, graduation rates improve, and communities become stronger. FSCS funding is not just about education; it is about equity, economic stability, and ensuring that every child, regardless of their zip code, has the opportunity to succeed.

I urge you to prioritize Full-Service Community Schools in this legislative session. Minnesota cannot afford to wait. Our students, families, and communities need these resources now more than ever. Please stand with us in making FSCS a funding priority.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and share the tangible successes we have seen at Excell Academy. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota's students.

Thank you for your consideration and support for Full-Service Community Schools, we urge you to pass SF 2007.

Sincerely,

Sabrina R. Williams

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Executive Director, Founder

Excell Academy for Higher Learning