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March 1, 2025

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

From: Sweta Patel, Community School Site Coordinator - Rochester Alternative Learning Center

Chair Kunesh and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Rochester Alternative Learning Center (ALC) 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.

The ALC serves 400 students, 75% of whom qualify for free-or-reduced lunch and 15% who meet the criteria for homelessness. Our Community School model has helped to create a

network of over a hundred community partners who are invested in our students' school success. Some examples include: Mayo Clinic (onsite clinic), Zumbro Valley Mental Health (onsite therapist), Families First and Bright Futures (onsite daycare), local churches and organizations who hold drives for our Resource Room and Food Pantry, Workforce Development (onsite Youth Career Planner), Rochester Technical & Community College (onsite college advisor), and countless other local individuals and businesses in the community who serve as classroom collaborators. This work requires funding for the Community School Site Coordinator role to help maintain, sustain, and broker community partnerships. It also requires funding to help support the work of our community partners.

Community Schools serve the whole-child, acknowledging that school success is dependent on addressing needs like hunger, dental pain, clothing needs, transportation issues, physical health, and more. When these needs are met, students can thrive in the classroom.

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

Sincerely,

Sweta Patel

Community School Site Coordinator

Rochester Alternative Learning Center