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March 10, 2025

Senate Education Finance Committee
Sen. Mary Kunesch, Chair
Minnesota State Senate
95 University Ave W
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Support for SF 1198 – Roof Projects Authorization in the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Program

Dear Chair Kunesch and Committee Members:

I am expressing my strong support for SF 1198, which would authorize roof projects as part of the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) program. This legislation is critical for ensuring that school districts, particularly those in rural Minnesota, have the financial flexibility to maintain safe, functional, and sustainable school buildings for students and staff.

Many school districts across the state, especially rural areas, face aging infrastructure with limited resources to address critical repairs. Roofing projects are among schools' most essential yet costly maintenance needs, impacting everything from structural integrity to energy efficiency. By allowing roof repairs and replacements to be included under the LTFM program, SF 1198 provides school districts with a sustainable funding solution that prevents expensive emergency repairs and extends the lifespan of school facilities.

Why is SF 1198 Essential for Rural Schools? Many rural districts operate in older buildings that are in dire need of roof replacements. Without dedicated funding, these necessary repairs are often deferred, leading to higher costs in the long run due to water damage, mold, and structural issues.

Further, unlike larger urban and suburban districts, many rural schools do not have the financial flexibility to fund major capital projects without significantly burdening local taxpayers. This bill ensures that all districts, regardless of location, can access the funding needed for proper roof maintenance.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Ely Public Schools is to educate all students in a positive and safe environment to become respectful and responsible persons who are lifelong learners

Rochelle Sjoberg, Chair
Hollie Coombe, Clerk
Thomas Omerza, Treasurer

Anthony Colarich, Director
Jennifer Westlund, Director
Erin Moravitz, Director

Senator's, a well-maintained roof improves energy efficiency, reducing heating and cooling costs for schools and allowing more funding to be directed toward educational programs and student support rather than high utility bills.

Finally, leaky or deteriorating roofs can lead to poor indoor air quality, mold growth, and unsafe learning conditions. SF 1198 ensures that schools can proactively address roofing issues before they become hazardous.

By including roof projects in the LTFM program, SF 1198 offers a practical, equitable solution that helps districts plan for and manage their facility needs without diverting resources from the classroom. This bill is a wise investment in the long-term sustainability of Minnesota's schools and will have a direct positive impact on students, teachers, and communities.

I appreciate your leadership in bringing this issue forward and urge the Minnesota Legislature to pass SF 1198 to ensure that every student—no matter where they live—has a safe, well-maintained school to learn in.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide further insight or testimony in support of this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Oelke', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

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