

Minnesota Senate Education Finance Committee
Hearing on SF 1275
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
Room 1150 Senate Building

Testimony from Michelle Baland, Principal at 916 Mahtomedi Academy (Northeast Metro Intermediate 916)

Greetings, Chair Kunesh and members of the committee.

Thank you for the time to speak to you about SF 1275. My name is Michelle Baland, principal of Mahtomedi Academy, co-located at Century College, in Northeast Metro Intermediate 916/ Mahtomedi Academy is one of three ALC's we operate serving over 500 full-time students across the north and east metro.

Equalizing Minnesota's **Extended Time Revenue Formula** is crucial for ensuring fair funding across **Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs) and Intermediate Districts**, both of which serve high-need student populations.

Impact on Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs)

ALCs provide critical educational support for students who struggle in traditional school settings. Many students attending ALCs face challenges such as poverty, truancy, learning disabilities, and credit deficiencies. These students are typically in grades 11 and 12+ and on the cusp of graduating despite many factors against them.

The needs of Minnesota students remain acute, and while the legislature provides additional support for schools, ALC students, who are served in programs like ours, are not the beneficiaries of equal opportunities. The .2 ADM ALCs rely on to provide the support our resilient yet fragile population is misleading because it has not kept pace with the funding formula. Today, that .2 is actually worth about a .13 ADM, leaving our most at risk students short-changed due to this legislative oversight we are encouraging you to change. We need your full commitment to accurately and fully account for the .2 ADM.

Meeting the needs of students from historically underserved communities from traditional school programs is critically important as Minnesota faces a persistent achievement gap and graduation rate discrepancies.

There are 5 main areas that equalizing the extended time formula will impact in both Alternative learning Centers and Targeted Services programming:

1. Critical Funding for Extended Learning Opportunities

- ALCs heavily depend on extended learning programs (e.g., after-school credit recovery, summer school) to help students graduate.
- Extended Learning Opportunities funded by the Extended Time Revenue can be a successful proactive approach to ensuring ALL students feel connected and supported in school

2. More Support for At-Risk Students

- ALC students, through no fault of their own, have unmet learning needs, and often need **extra academic time and alternative learning strategies** to succeed. These services are the difference makers in student lives.
- With equalized revenue, ALCs and traditional schools can continue providing interventions like **smaller class sizes, individualized instruction, and mental health services.**

3. Consistency in Services Across the State

- Currently, ALCs in wealthier districts can afford **more comprehensive** extended learning programs enhanced through the local levy. Districts like intermediates and service coops do not have access to the local levy to enhance programming, making the equalized .2 ADM critical.
- Equalization ensures **students in all regions** have access to similar opportunities, regardless of their school district's tax base.

4. Reducing the Financial Burden on Local Districts

- Many ALCs and Targeted Service programs rely on district funding, which **varies based on property tax revenue.**
- Equalized funding means **ALC programs won't have to rely as much on local district contributions,** ensuring financial stability.

5. Higher Graduation Rates and Future Success

- ALC students often require **additional instructional time to complete coursework and earn diplomas.**
- More students can **graduate and transition to college or careers** with funding equalized for extended learning programs.

In closing, while in the big picture, this is a small adjustment that makes a significant difference for THESE students - our most at-risk of not completing high school. These opportunities can be the difference between students reaching their potential or a lifetime of barriers.

Thank you for your attention and willingness to address this gap for our students.

References:

https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=PROD084523&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary