

Jake Karnopp
Board Chair
Fridley Public Schools
SF 2239
Speaking in support of SF 2239

Good morning, Chair Kunesh and members of the Education Finance Committee. My name is Jake Karnopp, and I proudly serve as the Chair of the Fridley Public Schools Board of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate File 2239.

As a school board, our role is to ensure strong fiscal stewardship while making decisions that support the long-term stability and success of our students, staff, and community. This task has become increasingly difficult as we face unprecedented financial challenges.

You just heard from Superintendent Lewis about the \$3.6 million in budget reductions for the 2025-26 school year—a number that could climb to \$4.8 million if compensatory revenue is reduced. I want to emphasize what these figures mean at the board level: this is not just about tightening budgets—it's about making devastating decisions that will directly impact our students and staff for years to come.

Fridley Public Schools serves a diverse student body, nearly 80% students of color, and over 70% from economically disadvantaged households. We are proud to be a district that welcomes all students and works relentlessly to meet their needs. But as a board, we are now forced to make choices that will strip away critical services—services our students and families rely on daily.

SF 2239 does not solve all our financial challenges. But it is a necessary step that helps districts like ours cut a little less deeply. With a relatively low tax base and below-average referendum market value, we do not have the same ability as other metro districts to generate local revenue. This bill recognizes that imbalance and helps create a more equitable playing field for districts like Fridley.

We are not asking for a blank check—we are asking for a sustainable and fair funding model that allows us to continue fulfilling our responsibility to provide an excellent education for every student.

Our district has always been resourceful. We have made difficult choices, sought efficiencies, and explored alternative funding streams. But we cannot continue balancing our budget on the backs of students and staff.

On behalf of the Fridley School Board and the families we serve, I urge you to support SF 2239 and take an important step toward stabilizing school funding for all Minnesota students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

