

March 31, 2025

Senator Kunesch, Chair  
Senate Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:**

My name is Brandon Wait, Executive Director and Principal of Paladin Career & Technical High School, a public charter school in Coon Rapids serving over 260 students. Approximately 60% of our students come from low-income families, and 35% receive special education services (twice the state average).

**I'm deeply concerned about the proposed cuts to charter school funding in SF2255, specifically targeting special education aid.** Unlike traditional district schools, charter schools cannot levy property taxes and rely heavily on state per-pupil funding. We already operate with fewer resources but must meet the same standards.

At Paladin, we've always done more with less, but further reductions threaten our ability to serve our most vulnerable students. **Losing even one special education teacher or social worker could eliminate entire programs critical for students with disabilities.** This jeopardizes critical interventions and sends the **message that *some* students deserve *less* than others, depending on what public type of public school they attend.**

Lastly, let me briefly share about Casey, a recent graduate who was credit-deficient and struggling before enrolling at Paladin. He flourished in our project-based environment, earned pre-apprenticeship certification, graduated, and is now working full-time while attending college. Casey said Paladin was "the first school that ever really believed in me."

These proposed cuts risk eliminating success stories like Casey's and shift higher costs to districts. **I respectfully urge you to protect the funding for public charter schools to ensure *ALL* students, regardless of where or how they learn, receive the high-quality education they deserve.**

Thank you for your consideration and for standing with all public school students.

**Respectfully,**





**Brandon N. Wait**

Executive Director & Principal, Paladin Career & Technical High School

*Coon Rapids, Minnesota*

