



CORNERSTONE
MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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March 31, 2025

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

Dear Chair Kunesh and Members:

My name is Alyssa Schwartz and I am the Head of School at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, a public charter school in operation since 2011.

As you consider SF2255, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

Cornerstone serves approximately 140 children on the East Side of St. Paul. Nearly 60% of our children qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch, more than 50% are People of the Global Majority, and 30% receive Special Education services. Our Special Education population has doubled in the last five years: families seek us out because we provide an excellent education in a high-fidelity Montessori environment where every child gets what they need.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean that the Montessori program we provide would be threatened. The greatest resource we offer our students is our excellent, qualified staff. Finding individuals who are both Montessori trained and hold a state teaching license is difficult and frequently requires that we make the financial investment to sponsor candidates to complete their Montessori training.

One of the reasons our special education program is so well received is that children who would be in Federal Setting II or III programs at other schools are integrated into the general education classroom. This requires personnel to support these children and accommodations to the Montessori curriculum that allows them to thrive. Cutting special education funding will directly impact the ability of our children to be included with their peers.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Schwartz
Head of School
Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School