

3/28/25

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

My name is Mymique Baxter, and I am the Principal at Kato Public Charter School in Mankato, MN.

While I understand the state's budget challenges, cutting critical funding for the 70,000 public school students and families who attend chartered public schools is unacceptable and inequitable. Chartered public school students already receive significantly less funding than those in traditional districts, and these cuts would be devastating and will force several charter schools to shut down entirely.

At this time, we should be investing more in our students, not less. We can't balance the state budget on the backs of **charter school students** and **students with disabilities**. These are public school students, and they deserve to be treated fairly with the same level of funding and support as any other student in our state.

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.

Kato Public Charter School Demographics:

- KPCS 45% Special Education vs State average of 18%
- KPCS 74% Free & Reduced Lunch vs State average of 43%

These budget cuts would have serious consequences for Kato Public Charter School and other charter schools across Minnesota. Here are some specific ways our school could be impacted:

1. **Possible School Closure** – A significant reduction in funding could jeopardize the financial stability of our school, potentially leading to closure. This would displace students and leave families scrambling for alternative educational options that may not meet their needs.
2. **Loss of Special Education Resources** – Students with disabilities would suffer the most, as reduced funding would lead to fewer specialized staff, assistive technologies, and tailored interventions that help them thrive in their learning environment.

3. **Staffing Reductions** – With budget cuts, we may be forced to reduce the number of teachers and support staff. This would lead to larger class sizes, less individualized instruction, and a heavier workload for remaining educators, impacting student outcomes.
4. **Decline in Educational Quality** – With fewer resources and less support for teachers, the quality of education across the state could decline. Schools may struggle to provide enrichment programs, professional development for teachers, and innovative learning opportunities that engage students and prepare them for the future.
5. **Extracurricular and Support Programs at Risk** – Programs like E-Sports, after-school tutoring, and mental health services could be scaled back or eliminated, further reducing opportunities for students to develop academically, socially, and emotionally.

Minnesota should be investing in all public school students, not making cuts that disproportionately harm those in charter schools. Our students deserve equal access to a high-quality education, and it's time for state leadership to prioritize fairness in public school funding.

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,

Dr. Mymique Baxter

Principal/Academic Director

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