

Senate File # SF225

Nancy Benson, Call to Action for Senate Testimony

April 1, 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 of the Committee:

My name is Nancy Benson, and I am an Assistant Principal at St. Cloud Math and Science Academy. As you review SF2255, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to draw your attention to the deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school funding, specifically in the area of special education.

At St. Cloud Math and Science Academy, our students, who range in age from 5 to 14, are multilingual learners, with 98% of our student population identifying as Black. All of our students receive free breakfast and lunch, and a great percentage of them rely on special education services. We provide services for a wide range of disabilities, including OHD, SLD, EBD, ASD, SP/L, DD, and DCD. This diverse population of learners deserves the highest level of support, and the funding we currently receive is critical to meeting their needs.

Reductions in special education funding would have a severe impact on our ability to serve our students. Specifically, such cuts would mean case managers taking on higher caseloads, students being placed in larger groups, teacher burnout, and diminished academic and behavioral outcomes. These outcomes would undoubtedly hinder our

students' growth and well-being.

As you move forward with the Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this essential funding for charter school students, especially in the area of special education. Our students need your support now more than ever to ensure they have access to the services and resources they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this crucial issue. We appreciate your commitment to the future of all Minnesota students.

Sincerely,

Nancy Benson
Assistant Principal/Special Education Director
St. Cloud Math and Science Academy