



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 Brett Wedlund, and I am the Executive Director at Nova Classical Academy. I am writing in **strong opposition to SF2255** and the proposed special education funding cuts to charter schools included in the bill.

Nova Classical Academy is a public charter school in St. Paul serving more than 1,000 K–12 students. Nova consistently ranks among the top five schools in Minnesota for reading and math proficiency. In 2023, **we were the only school in the state recognized as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School**, and we are proud recipients of a *National Blue Ribbon Award*. Despite being one of the highest-performing public schools in Minnesota, **we are also among the lowest-funded**. During the 2023–2024 school year, **our per-pupil funding ranked 500th out of the 511** traditional school districts and chartered public schools in the state.

**A core element of our educational model at Nova Classical Academy is virtue education.** All of our students are taught to embody the cardinal virtues of **fortitude, justice, temperance, prudence, and wisdom**. What truly strikes me about the proposed cuts to charter schools in the Governor's proposed budget is **how deeply they conflict with the virtue of justice**.

Charter schools in Minnesota already face significant funding inequities. We are excluded from local optional revenue, safe schools aid, and several other streams of public funding. The Governor's proposed budget specifically targets students receiving special education services—**some of the most vulnerable and high-need youth in our state**. These are students who deserve more support, not less. Our special education population has grown by 5.1% over the last five years, and **the work we do to serve these students is critical**.

The proposed special education funding cuts would amount to **approximately a 1.9% reduction in Nova Classical Academy's overall budget**—not just our special education budget. This would have a tangible and **negative impact on the services we provide to students who rely on them most**.

I must also point out the **lack of prudence and wisdom in introducing this type of change just months before implementation**. We have worked intentionally to provide stability to our school

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community. Even through the pandemic, we have maintained high student and teacher retention, averaging 93% and 88.1%, respectively, over the past five years.

**One of the ways we have been able to provide that stability is by being prudent and thoughtful in considering the long-term implications of our decisions.** A change of this magnitude, implemented on the timeline of the next biennium's budget, **would prevent us from exercising the level of prudence that has helped create this stable environment for our community.**

It is disheartening to see someone who once served as an educator propose a budget that would jeopardize the education of students who need our services the most. **This is not a budgetary necessity—it is a policy choice.** While I cannot speak for each of you, I can say with certainty that **this proposal does not align with the mission of Nova Classical Academy or with the virtues we strive to instill in our students.**

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill I respectfully ask you to reconsider this proposal and to **advocate for a budget that reflects the virtues of justice, prudence, and wisdom for all public school students in our state.** Minnesota's commitment to education must include charter school students—particularly those receiving special education services.

It's a Great Day to be a Knight!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brett Wedlund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brett" and last name "Wedlund" clearly legible.

Dr. Brett Wedlund  
Executive Director

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