



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:

Prodeo Academy is a public charter school serving over 1,100 students in grades PreK-8 across two campuses in Columbia Heights and St. Paul.

As you consider SF2255, the Governor's proposed budget, we want to call your attention to the proposed cuts to charter school special education tuition aid and Long-Term Facilities Maintenance revenue. These reductions would have a devastating impact on charter public school students, particularly those with the greatest need.

We were surprised and deeply concerned to see that the updated budget includes cuts to funding for charter schools, especially when we are already operating with roughly 70% of the public funding that traditional districts receive. Unlike districts, charter schools do not have access to local levies or special education cross-subsidy aid. These proposed changes would slash \$418,000 from Prodeo's special education funding, dollars that directly support our students receiving special education services.

Because we are still held to federal maintenance-of-effort requirements, that funding gap cannot be absorbed in special education - it would force us to make immediate and painful cuts to our core academic programs and student supports. With budgets already set for the upcoming year, a loss of this size is not something we can adjust for at the last minute and would devastate our school and programming.

Parents of students with disabilities are choosing Prodeo because we provide the individualized support and rigorous education their children deserve. At Prodeo Academy, our mission is to close Minnesota's opportunity gap by delivering a rigorous, high-quality, and personalized education to students who have historically been underserved. Over 87% of our students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and we serve nearly twice as many English Learners and students experiencing homelessness per capita as the average district school.

PERSEVERANCE RESPECT INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT ENGAGEMENT

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A C A D E M Y

Despite these challenges, our students are thriving: they consistently outperform peers from similar backgrounds on standardized tests and graduate from 8th grade prepared to excel in high school. We accomplish this through extended school days, strong family partnerships, and innovative programs like Mind Lab, after school tutoring, and our Prodeo Alumni Collective, all funded through creative budgeting and careful stewardship of every public dollar.

Make no mistake: cuts to charter school funding *are* cuts to public school students; students who are already fighting for equitable access to opportunity.

As you shape the Education budget, we urge you to protect critical funding for students who attend public charter schools. Any reduction, let alone \$41 million statewide, will significantly disrupt services for students who rely on us most.

Thank you for your time and leadership on behalf of all Minnesota students.

Sincerely,

Chancey Anderson & Rick Campion
Prodeo Academy Co-Founders

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