



*We serve a diverse student body to succeed in a rigorous college preparatory program. Our mission is to ensure that all students graduate with the skills to achieve in college, to contribute positively to society, and to be accepting of all people.*

March 28, 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 Betsy Lueth, and I am the Executive Director of Twin Cities Academy charter school. We are a well-established 25 year old charter school on the eastside of St. Paul.

**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.**

We currently serve 550 students in grades 6th - 12th. 85% of our students are students of color, representing all racial and cultural demographics, and 70% of our students qualify for free and/or reduced priced lunch. 24% of our students currently receive special education services, and a large majority are considered high needs either academically or emotionally. And several of our especially high needs students were asked to leave or administratively transferred from their traditional school district. However, after coming to TCA, the students have found that the smaller setting was a place in which they were better able to thrive and learn.

We also serve 18% of our students with English Language Learning needs, including many recent immigrants, and we celebrate every year, a large percentage of our students graduating with the skills and ability to move onto 2 and 4 year colleges on academic

scholarships, sometimes very substantial. We feel our school's mission and commitment to meeting students where they are and providing them the support and enrichment they need, gives them opportunities which may not have been available to them otherwise.

In our school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean substantial layoffs throughout our school, increased class sizes (current 25-30 per class), increased special education teacher caseloads (currently most teachers have over 20 on their caseload already) and potentially our inability to remain in business after 25 years (it could shut us down).

TCA serves students with approximately 65% of the per pupil revenue that St. Paul Public Schools and other neighboring traditional schools receive. We are already functioning as lean and efficient as we are able. The additional cuts would be catastrophic to our already stretched budget.

The cuts the Governor is proposing will cut close to \$500,000 from our small budget, and are largely cuts to Special Education funding. These cuts targeting charter schools will make our funding even more inequitable and cause us to be unable to support students with Special Education well if at all.

Please don't add to the uncertainty we already feel about how public schools will be funded. We respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this turbulent time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

**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,

*Betsy Lueth*

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