



April 9, 2025

Via E-Mail Delivery

Senator Mary K. Kunesch, Chair
3209 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Jason Rarick, Republican Lead
3413 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Kunesch and Senator Rarick,

Thank you for your leadership with the Senate Education Finance Committee. MINNDEPENDENT is the largest and most connected organization serving and supporting nonpublic schools in Minnesota. On behalf of our 181 member schools and more than 41,000 students educated by our members schools, I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed elimination of aids to nonpublic students and nonpublic pupil transportation services included in Governor Walz's budget recommendations to the legislature as part of SF2255.

Nearly 73,000 students attend nonpublic schools in Minnesota. The average size of a nonpublic school is 165 students. The median size is 115 students – which means there are 230 nonpublic schools in Minnesota that have fewer than 115 students.

Eliminating these essential services – with more than five decades of precedent – harms students and families, particularly those who rely on these services the most. Ending these programs serves no public good and penalizes students and families just because they attend a nonpublic school.

Why should Minnesotans care about the cuts to students?

- Eliminating these services cuts access to mental health supports, nursing, textbooks, and instructional materials at a time when student needs—especially for mental health services—are rising.
- It increases costs and creates inequity: Low-income families and rural communities would face higher costs and reduced access to resources, widening gaps in educational equity.
- Ending transportation aid would compromise student safety, exacerbate the bus driver shortage, increase traffic congestion, and raise costs for both school districts and nonpublic schools by eliminating efficient, shared routes.



For decades, Minnesota's legislature has recognized that the health, safety, and education of all students are worth protecting. For those of us who work closely with nonpublic schools, it's quite stunning to see the term "nonpublic" completely removed from the statutes that guide these services.

We ask you to uphold this commitment by preserving nonpublic pupil and transportation services and not exclude students in your districts just because their family has chosen to attend a nonpublic school.

I ask once again - how is this "fair" "equitable" or "in the public interest" for students?

Regardless of the state budget, the legislative make-up or leadership in the Executive Branch over the past 50 years, these services have never been proposed for complete elimination. I strongly urge the legislature to protect these essential services that directly impact students and families of Minnesota and ensure fair and equitable treatment for all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the concerns of nonpublic students and families of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Tim Benz'.

Tim Benz
President

CC: Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee