



Dear Members of the Minnesota State Education Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed elimination of funding for the STARBASE program under SF2255. As a school administrator, I have seen firsthand the profound impact this program has on students—particularly those in rural communities like ours.

Our school in Babbitt, MN serves a remarkable group of students, many of whom have limited opportunities to experience the world beyond our small community and the Iron Range. The STARBASE program provides a rare and meaningful chance for these students to travel, explore the Duluth Air Base, and engage in high-quality, hands-on STEM education that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

I have personally attended the program alongside our students and can confidently say it is one of the most valuable educational experiences we offer. The excitement and engagement I've witnessed—students working together to solve real-world problems, discovering the possibilities within science, technology, engineering, and math—are simply unmatched.

Eliminating this funding would remove a vital resource that inspires our youth, broadens their horizons, and equips them with the skills and confidence they need to thrive in an increasingly STEM-driven world. I urge you to reconsider this cut and continue supporting a program that makes a lasting difference in the lives of Minnesota students.

Thank you for your time and commitment to educational equity and excellence.

Sincerely,

John Vukmanich, Principal
Northeast Range School, Babbitt, MN
"Home of the Nighthawks"