

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Senate State and Local Government Committee
Tou Xiong, Chair
3203 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Senate File 0787

Chair Xiong and Committee Members,

At 5:12 AM on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, Bloomington Public School Parents, Guardians, and Staff received the following email:

“Bloomington Public Schools will implement an E-learning Day today, Wednesday, March 5, and schools will be closed for all in-person learning. This decision is due to severe winter weather conditions, with accumulating snow and high winds through mid-morning.”

The decision was made as a safety measure for all involved—except for the Bloomington School Board. The Legislative Committee had a meeting scheduled at 9:30 AM that same day to prepare for the Minnesota School Board Association’s Day at the Capitol on March 10, 2025. Since committee meetings are publicly posted, we had two options:

1. Meet in person at the district office at 9:30 AM on March 5, 2025.
2. Cancel the meeting and reschedule with the legally required 72-hour notice—resulting in a rescheduled meeting for Monday, March 10, the same day we’d be at the Capitol.

What was NOT an option? Meeting virtually.

On an E-learning Day, when travel was hazardous, the committee was legally barred from meeting online. By 9:15 AM, when most members had to leave for the meeting, many side streets were unplowed, and Metro Transit had temporarily suspended service.

Given the urgency of planning for the event and the inability to meet virtually, committee members braved the weather to attend the meeting in person. One member used an SUV to navigate the conditions, another had a spouse help shovel and drive, and a third was picked up en route. We were fortunate to have large vehicles and assistance, and thankful that no one encountered accidents (we saw two on the way to the meeting). We were also fortunate not to rely on public transit, which was unavailable.

While SF 0787 allows for remote attendance, we want to be sure it also removes the 72 hours’ notice requirement. We urge the committee to incorporate wording that would allow an in-person meeting to transition to virtual in cases like March 5, when the Twin Cities metro was under a Winter Storm Warning, and school districts and colleges across the region closed for

in-person activities. This flexibility would also be beneficial if a member is unable to attend in person due to an unexpected illness or injury that can't be anticipated 72 hours in advance.

We thank Senator Mann for authoring the bill and for the committee for considering changes to the Open Meeting Law. Any progress toward enabling remote attendance is a positive step, and the Bloomington School Board Legislative Committee appreciates your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Mia Olson (Chair), Tom Bennett, Heather Starks
Legislative Committee
Bloomington School Board