

April 22, 2025

Senator Ann Rest, Chair
Senate Taxes Committee

Denise Specht
President

Monica Byron
Vice President

Rodney Rowe
Secretary-Treasurer

Carrie Lucking
Executive Director

Dear Chair Rest,

We represent over 84,000 past, present and future educators, who are counting on you to make the investments in our schools that our children and educators deserve.

Minnesota is facing an educator shortage crisis due to the chronic underfunding of public education over the past several decades. Nearly 9 out of 10 schools in Minnesota are severely impacted by the shortage. With high levels of burnout and low pay—teachers make 31% less than other professionals in the state with the same credentials—the shortage is no surprise. Even with the investments made in 2023, school district budgets remain years behind in keeping pace with the cost of living and in fully supporting the needs of students.

Our top priorities are educator pay, pensions and health care, and we can only make gains in these areas with stable funding from the state. To help address this crisis, the Legislature must maintain the education wins passed in previous sessions and raise revenue for additional funding, as necessary.

Education Minnesota would like to highlight several areas of concern, as well as several areas of support.

Concern – Removing Inflation from the Basic Formula

The solid investments in 2023 were the first meaningful attempt in decades to support our students and educators by increasing the per-pupil funding formula and linking it to inflation. These investments were a critical first step in addressing decades of underfunding in public education and provide educators with negotiating power at the bargaining table.

Because of this, Education Minnesota is extremely concerned about the Senate proposal to remove inflation from the basic formula. This will negatively impact district budgets at a time when our students and educators desperately need stability. Student learning conditions are educator working conditions. With looming federal cuts to education, we need our state leaders now more than ever.

We urge you to reconsider this proposal and maintain the per-pupil funding formula tied to inflation. If this cannot be achieved under the current budget, the Legislature must raise

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progressive revenue to protect essential programs. This link to inflation was a major win for educators in 2023 and we cannot afford to go backward. Without this tie to inflation, urgently needed wage increases and more affordable healthcare will be impossible to win at the bargaining table.

Support: Unemployment for Hourly School Workers & Personnel Requirements

We strongly support language included in the Senate Education Finance bill that continues unemployment insurance for hourly school workers and makes sure our students with special needs have one-on-one supports by creating a pathway for paraprofessionals to meet federal personnel requirements.

In today's classrooms, education support professionals (ESPs) play a vital role in students' success. Yet in Minnesota, these essential workers are often overworked and underpaid. Rising costs—from inflation to skyrocketing health insurance—are making it harder for them to make ends meet. For this reason, we urge you to vote against any effort to roll back unemployment insurance for ESPs. This will ensure students continue to receive the consistent support they need, and that ESPs get the financial stability they deserve. Hourly school workers count on this benefit that all other seasonal workers have access to. Before this became law in 2023, ESPs were forced to either find temporary summer work or go without pay for nearly three months every year. Many found higher-paying summer jobs with better benefits and didn't return to school in the fall. We know that educator working conditions are student learning conditions and high ESP turnover creates a difficult learning environment.

Nonpublic aid

Education Minnesota supports the reductions in public money for private schools in the proposed budgets of Gov. Tim Walz and the Minnesota Senate. Minnesota has a constitutional responsibility to provide a general and uniform system of education to our students through public school, especially when President Trump and his enablers in Congress are gutting special education, high-needs schools, vo-tech training, career counseling, after-school programs and Medicaid. Public schools in Minnesota will need every dollar to absorb these cuts and limit layoffs, program cuts and increasing class sizes. Under our current budget, nonpublic schools receive more per pupil funding for guidance counselors than students in our public schools. This is irresponsible state budgeting.

Compensatory revenue aid

Our local unions rely on consistent funding from the state, and so we are supportive of the Senate's investments in maintain expected compensatory revenue funding. We support a short-term and a long-term solution to anticipated fiscal cliffs in compensatory revenue.

Students thrive when they are supported by consistent, trusted adults year after year. Our schools function best when staff are healthy, financially secure and fully present to meet students' needs. We urge you to support educators and invest in our students.

Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denise Specht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Denise" and last name "Specht" clearly distinguishable.

Denise Specht, President
Education Minnesota

CC: Members of the Senate Taxes Committee; Senator Mary Kunesch

