

February 10, 2025

Re. Reassessing Minnesota's Teacher Recruitment Campaign for Greater Impact and Accountability

Chair Kresha and Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

Minnesota School Jobs helps to build and support a strong, diverse educator workforce for Minnesota's children and families.

I am writing to express my concern about the Department of Education's current and planned spending on programs to attract individuals into teacher education programs and the profession.

Over the past three years, the state has spent more than \$1.5 million on contracts and grants with external vendors to elevate the profession and recruit teachers, especially teachers of color and American Indian teachers. Oversight of these funds has been the responsibility of PELSB, and I support the initiative to consolidate educator workforce development efforts into MDE's charge. However, while some admirable coalition-building has taken place, there is little evidence that the state's investment from the past few years has gone towards practical steps in implementing a recruitment campaign.

Looking forward, an estimated \$2.4 million is earmarked for spending in the current and next two years. \$1.4 million of these funds are appropriated to a California-based firm, TEACH.org, with no open or competitive process for selection nor a clear record of success in Minnesota. This firm was selected without input from essential stakeholders in school districts or colleges of teacher education. Without your intervention, Minnesota schools and students risk losing more years and significant resources with little to show.

I encourage the Committee to direct MDE to take a more cost-effective and transparent approach. Our state has local organizations that can do this recruiting work for far less money. Minnesota-based groups know our communities, schools, and institutions of higher education well and have a real track record of helping new teachers get into classrooms. Instead of repeating the same marketing approach that has not shown strong results, we can focus on proven methods—like supporting local recruitment programs, forming closer partnerships among schools and universities, and reducing barriers for paraprofessionals or career-changers interested in teaching.

As you decide whether to support the continued funding of these vendors and to continue with a no-bid contract for TEACH.org, please consider the limited progress so far and whether we can afford to have more of the same. Instead, consider collecting information from the key stakeholders and the more significant potential for impact and sustainability from local solutions. Your choices will affect our entire state's schools, students, and communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope you will join me in backing a more transparent, practical plan that uses school support resources wisely and truly serves Minnesota's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Hoehn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Chris Hoehn
President, Minnesota School Jobs



February 10, 2025

Minnesota House of Representatives
Education Finance Committee

RE: Governor Tim Walz's Education Budget Recommendations

Dear Chairman Kresha and Members of the Education Finance Committee,

My name is Catrin Wigfall, and I am an education policy fellow for American Experiment, a grassroots public policy organization. I am writing today in opposition to Governor Tim Walz's education budget recommendations, particularly line items 69 and 70 that eliminate nonpublic pupil education aid and nonpublic pupil transportation aid.

First approved by the Minnesota Legislature nearly 50 years ago, this funding is intended to ensure that "every school pupil in the state will share equitably in education benefits and therefore further assure all Minnesota students and their parents freedom of choice in education." According to Minnesota Administrative Rules, this funding is also necessary "in order to promote equal educational opportunity for every student in Minnesota."

Eliminating this aid would be a step backward for educational freedom and would not meaningfully address the state's budget challenges. The total nonpublic student aid allocation for FY 2025-2027 is less than half a percent — 0.4 percent — of E-12 education's biennial budget.

Instead, American Experiment recommends the legislature return to setting the basic formula allowance for each school year. Currently, changes to the basic formula allowance are set to increase automatically at the rate of the Consumer Price Index between two to three percent every year, regardless of changing factors such as enrollment. Considering that education is the largest part of the state budget, this autopilot increase puts tremendous pressure on the legislature (particularly when there is a deficit) to raise taxes to balance the budget. For example, if Minnesota public school enrollment continues to decline, as it has for the past four consecutive years, the legislature will still be forced to increase K-12 spending.

American Experiment respectfully requests nonpublic pupil aid to not be eliminated — our neighbors Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, along with two dozen other states, have similar provisions for nonpublic pupil transportation aid and Iowa and South Dakota, along with 18 other states, have similar provisions for nonpublic pupil aid for textbooks and learning materials.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catrin Wigfall".

Catrin Wigfall
Policy Fellow
American Experiment



MAIS Fast Facts

- Non-profit, independent school organization
- 17 schools: Pre-primary, elementary, middle and high schools
- MAIS schools serve over 10,000 Minnesota students and their families
- MAIS schools employ over 3,400 Minnesotans

2025 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- Preserve the “independent” status of MAIS schools by opposing proposals that create onerous regulations or unfunded mandates, which have a negative impact on MAIS students, families, faculty and staff.
- Support necessary state funding for nonpublic pupil aid (ie; textbooks, counseling, transportation, health services).
 - Expand nonpublic pupils counseling aid to include students in grades K-6.
 - Allow nonpublic schools to access school safety funding for physical security upgrades.
- Serve as a resource to elected officials involved in E-12 education public policy.

MN Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) is a cohort of 17 independent schools in Minnesota that have achieved, or are in pursuit of, ISACS accreditation. Through the ISACS accreditation process, MAIS member schools hold themselves publicly accountable to accepted standards of quality education, responsible operations and on-going improvement. The mission of MAIS is to support and connect school leadership, faculty and staff while promoting and preserving education independence and choice for MN families and educators.

MAIS School	Location	District
Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School	St. Louis Park	46
Breck School	Golden Valley	43
City of Lakes Waldorf School	Minneapolis	62
Friends School of Minnesota	St. Paul	66
Groves Academy	St. Louis Park	46

Lake Country Montessori School	Minneapolis	62
Many Rivers Montessori	Duluth	8
Marshall School	Duluth	8
Minnehaha Academy	Minneapolis	63
Mounds Park Academy	St. Paul	44
Providence Academy	Plymouth	42
Saint Thomas Academy	Mendota Heights	52
St. John's Preparatory School	Collegeville	13
Shattuck-St. Mary's School	Faribault	19
St. Paul Academy & Summit School	St. Paul	64
The Blake School	Hopkins, Minneapolis	46, 61
Visitation School	Mendota Heights	52

MAIS member schools differ in many ways. They are secular, religious, single-gender, day and boarding schools, and some pedagogically based, but all support providing families with choice in education. Not only do MAIS schools save Minnesota tax dollars, which would otherwise have been spent in educating children in public schools, but MAIS students also represent Minnesota at myriad colleges and universities and often end up giving back to the state in a variety of leadership roles. Additionally, MAIS schools provide a number of vital jobs for adults living in Minnesota.

More about MAIS school communities:

- Total enrollment in MAIS schools for the 2021-2022 school year was over 10,000 students, saving taxpayers potentially \$110,000,000 in state funds required to educate additional students in public schools.
- MAIS schools employ over 3,400 full-time and part-time workers in Minnesota.
- MAIS schools provide health/retirement benefits to 1,400+ employees totaling over \$20 million dollars.

For more information about MAIS and its member schools, please contact Shep Harris at sharris@fredgov.com or 612-219-8531.



Nonpublic Pupil Aid Impacts

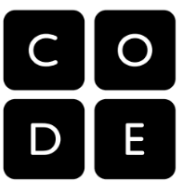
Total amount MAIS schools currently receive in nonpublic pupil aid annually? \$2,930,816

Effects of Budget Cuts to Nonpublic Pupil Aid and Nonpublic Pupil Transportation Aid:*

- One out of four (26%) of our families receive need-based tuition assistance. Elimination of nonpublic aid would disproportionately affect our low-income families by increasing textbook expenses, instructional materials costs, and busing costs. It is unlikely that a number of these families would be able to stay at our school.
- Regarding transportation, I am not sure there is a viable alternative that we could support through fees, no matter what we charge. We gain tremendous efficiencies working with the (public school) district on transportation, and cutting the program would mean that our highest-need, highest-aid families would likely have no way to attend our school. Transportation is an equity issue.
- As a school for students with dyslexia and other learning differences, many of whom have been recommended by their public school to attend our academy, cutting financial assistance would prevent our students from learning how to manage their learning differences while learning how to read and write...Our school provides significant tuition assistance to families, further increasing access to a highly specialized educational experience. The cut in funds would also affect the ability of some of our families to attend.
- We would lose nursing services, drastically reduce our counseling services and programming for students, and potentially lose students due to transportation.
- We have relied on non-public pupil aid to support the purchase of textbooks, class readers, and other critical materials for our school programs for many years.
- ...student speech and language support compromised; reduced educational technology and training on how to properly leverage those resources; fewer resources for bus transportation maintenance that may compromise student safety.
- It would limit access to professional development that ensures that faculty are current with their credentials, certifications, and practice.
- Those funds are used for books, reading software, typing software, music software, student learning accommodation programs, both physical and digital and dyslexia programming. Withdrawal of those funds would lead to an impact on each student who attends our school.

* Sample responses from MAIS school heads on proposed budget cuts to Nonpublic Pupil Aid and Nonpublic Pupil Transportation Aid.

For more information about MAIS and its member schools,
please contact Shep Harris at sharris@fredgov.com or 612-219-8531.



mntech.
Minnesota Technology Association

CS Minnesota



PLTW



sphero

Chair Kresha, Vice Chair Bakeberg and members of the House Education Finance Committee:

On behalf of the CSforALL-MN Policy Working Group, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting FY 2026-2027 state budget investments in computer science. The CSforALL-MN Policy Working Group is a diverse coalition representing education groups, the nonprofit sector, and industry.

We appreciate the \$1 million biennial appropriation for computer science in the Governor's proposed budget, an amount that will maintain existing staff and administrative functions within the Minnesota Department of Education relating to computer science. **However, in order for Minnesota to make real progress in expanding access to this critical 21st century subject - and move out of [third-to-last place in the country](#) - we recommend the following additional investments from the State Strategic Plan for Computer Science:**

- **K-8 Computer Science Standards** - standards for integrating computer science at the K-5 level, and standards for required computer science instruction in grades 6-8
- **Funding for Local Education Agency (LEA) CS Planning and Implementation** - \$3 M for a competitive grant program to award 200 LEAs \$15,000 each to create a comprehensive plan that helps them prepare to offer and scale computer science; \$1 million for a competitive grant program to award LEAs with funding to implement their CS plans
- **Teacher Licensure Incentives and Infrastructure** - \$125k annually to PELSB for computer science licensure support and incentives to earn licensure; \$100k annually to PELSB for grants to teacher preparation programs to create computer science teacher licensure programs
- **Advisory Committee** - \$100,000 annually to establish an ongoing Advisory Committee to work with MDE to support implementation of the Computer Science State Plan, including creating resources and building awareness of computer science in communities

Computer science is now an essential part of a well-rounded, modern education. In today's world, understanding concepts like the Internet, algorithms, and debugging is just as important as learning civics or biology. Regardless of a student's future career aspirations, computer science provides an opportunity to enhance collaborative and problem-solving skills, which is beneficial to all students. Unfortunately, Minnesota is behind almost every other state in the percentage of high schools offering computer science. Data on K-8 computer science is less reliable, but available information from Code.org shows **only 30% of middle schools offer the subject.**

The policies listed above are critical next steps to expand the capacity of districts, especially those with rural and small schools, to offer computer science. Standards are essential as, without them, teachers will lack guidance on what to teach and when. Standards guidance will also allow for a more thoughtful accumulation of skills throughout the K-12 pathway, while guaranteeing that every student can acquire the computer science skills necessary to navigate our digital world. Ongoing support for implementation in the form of funding will ensure LEAs have the resources to scale and meet students needs, and will avoid an unfunded mandate. Finally, additional teacher licensure

support will ensure the state can recruit and retain a strong teacher pipeline, and enable equity in access to high quality computer science teachers.

We urge consideration of the above additional computer science investments as part of this year's biennial budget. Thank you for your consideration.