

Good morning,

As a Minnesota teacher, I am writing to request your support to maintain Q-Comp funding for the Minnesota Department of Education.

Q-Comp has been an integral part of assuring excellence in Minnesota education, including

- Providing mandatory observations and coaching for Minnesota teachers
- Facilitating annual reflection, review, and accountability for teacher job performance
- Professional development promoting best practices for Minnesota students

If this program is cut, it will have a significant impact on teaching and learning, specifically cutting the programs that ensure ALL students are learning and teachers are providing interventions to struggling students. It will also result in significant job loss in every Q-comp school district and a significant pay cut for all of those public school teachers.

Thank you for your support,

Elizabeth Grawe

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

*My name is Julie Henderson and I am an administrator at Hennepin Schools, a public charter school in South Minneapolis authorized by Friends of Education. See: <https://www.hennepinschools.org/>*

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Hennepin Schools serves 96% free and reduced priced lunch students, 60% of whom are ELL and 10% of whom have an IEP or 504. We are an opportunity gap closing school with an emphasis on the core subjects. This year US News and World Report listed us as one of the Best Charter Schools in MN, based on MDE data.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean fewer teachers. Fewer great teachers. Period.

Working with students with IEPs and 504s requires skills, often learned on the job. The impact on the general fund would lead us to cut classroom teachers and to increased class sizes. We have barely come out of the pandemic academically, and the amount of unmet mental health needs for children in poverty in Minneapolis impacts our staff's ability to do its job well. Taking away that staff would derail our efforts of an equitable high quality education.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Julie M. Hendersn, Ed. D.  
Executive Director  
Hennepin Schools

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Deborah Weckman, and I am the Administrative Assistant at the MN Guild of Public Charter Schools.

As you evaluate HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I am deeply concerned about the problematic cuts to funding for chartered public schools. These reductions, particularly in special education funding, would significantly affect the students and families who rely on us.

At the MN Guild, we serve 15 charter schools and approximately 5,000 students. Our charter schools stand out for innovative programs, inclusive culture, or academic achievements. These funding cuts would lead to irrefutable academic impacts on minority students, with reduced staffing, fewer resources, or the closure of programs critical to our students' success.

These proposed reductions would undermine our ability to provide equitable opportunities, especially for students with disabilities, who deserve better from their state leaders. As you finalize the Education Finance Omnibus bill, we urge you to prioritize and protect the funding that charter school students depend on, now more than ever.

Thank you for considering this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Debbie Weckman  
Administrative Assistant  
[MN Guild of Public Charter Schools](#)

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Paula Letourneau and I am the Operations Manager at Sojourner Truth Academy.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *Sojourner Truth Academy serves 400 scholars in grades PK-8 grade. STA currently serves 61 special education students with the support of 14 special education staff.*
- *Sojourner Truth Academy has been serving the North Minneapolis community for 26 years. We are on track with 85% completion of our 5 year strategic plan. Our staff are over 60% people of color with a 6.2 average tenure. We were just awarded the Grow Your Own entitlement funding for the 2025-2026 school year and are eager to move 5 paraprofessional educators onto a teacher licensure pathway. STA is making positive change and growing the future leadership of the local community and State of Minnesota.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean cutting general education staff to serve the federally mandated services of special education. Removing general education paraprofessionals from our two prekindergarten and two kindergarten classrooms.

- *Our youngest learners, in (2) PreK classrooms, will have their education support cut in half with a ratio of educators to scholars of 1:6 changed to 1:12. Another (2) Kindergarten classrooms will experience a ratio from 1:12 to 1:24*
- *Reducing the hours of an already skeletal administration of 6 staff who provide services in areas of compliance reporting, parent communication, health response, food service, facilities maintenance, and accounting.*
- *Cutting academic specialists positions that provide professional coaching and support in math, English Language Arts and Special Education. These are the three positions that are allowing us to see academic growth among our most challenged scholars.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Paula Letourneau

--

Paula D. Letourneau, MNM

*pronouns she/her/hers*

**Operations Manager**

District # 4038-07

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Jasper, and I am a Special Education Paraprofessional at Sojourner Truth Academy

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the deeply problematic cuts being proposed to chartered public school students. These cuts include significant reductions to special education funding, which directly affect students who rely on essential resources to succeed.

At my school, we serve students of diverse backgrounds and unique needs, including a significant percentage of children with disabilities. I work closely with 4th grade students and these students thrive because of the personalized care and dedication of our teachers and staff, paired with the crucial support provided by state special education funding.

The programming at STA is designed to foster academic achievement and personal development through innovative teaching methods tailored to each child. Without adequate special education funding, many of our students would lose access to the services they need—such as individualized learning plans, speech therapy, or mental health support.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean larger class sizes, diminished resources, and limited access to the therapies that ensure our students' success. The impact on their education would be profound and heartbreaking.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Thank you for your attention and dedication to this matter.

Sincerely, Jasper McNeal

Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, and Chairs Kunesh, Kresha, and Youakim-

Brandon Wait here, Executive Director of [Paladin Career & Technical High School](#) in Coon Rapids, where 35% of our student body receives special education services. While I recognize the state's budget challenges, I am deeply concerned about the proposed reductions to public charter school funding, especially those affecting special education.

Chartered public school students in our state already ***receive significantly less funding*** than their district counterparts, and these cuts would be devastating, potentially leading to school closures. **This is a moment to invest more in our students, not less.** I respectfully urge you to protect critical funding for the nearly 70,000 Minnesota students who attend public charter schools, including the 260+ students at Paladin, specifically those who rely on specialized services.

**Please do not add to the uncertainty by undercutting the resources our students need and deserve.** I ask you to stand firmly with **ALL** public school students, especially those with disabilities, and ensure that our state is stepping up rather than stepping back during this challenging time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Our students are counting on your support!

Feel free to stop by for a school tour and see firsthand the great work our passionate teachers do with our youth.

Don't take it just from me, please read a few recent Paladin Family quotes.

- *"My daughter tried attending traditional public school and was like a round peg going into a square hole. We homeschooled up until we stumbled across Paladin and it's been a life changing event for her. Thank you!" -- Regina Poole*
- *"Paladin teachers and staff have gone above and beyond to help motivate and encourage my child. He wants to return to Paladin where as he did not with other schools." -- Sarah McClellan*
- *"Keep doing what you ALL do, the students need what you do for them! The struggle is real & it they're still showing up, they're still wanting to finish and succeed because of YOU and their relationship. I only wish I had a school setting like this when I was a student." -- Amy Clark*
- *"Compared to previous schools, my child has been treated so differently at Paladin! Here, people lift him up, not tear him down." -- Jill Dahl*
- *"The feeling of belonging and acceptance that my child has received at Paladin has been overwhelmingly positive. We are both grateful for everything you have done this past year and we are excited to see what next year holds in store." -- Regina Poole*
- *"Paladin has the most amazing teachers I've ever been with! They actually understand what I'm dealing with and where I need help. I love this school, I love the people, and I love the teachers. Thank you Paladin for saving me." -- Student Phoebe Handy*

Respectfully,

**Brandon N. Wait**

Executive Director | Principal

*he/him/his*

Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members,

I am Marnie, a parent at Minnesota Online High School, and I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the proposed cuts to chartered public schools within HF2433, the Governor's budget. Specifically, the reductions to special education funding are deeply troubling.

My son, who has thrived at MNHOS after struggling in a traditional setting, relies on a 504 plan. These cuts directly threaten his ability to graduate. Without essential support, students like him face a bleak future, potentially dropping out. Is this the outcome we desire for our young adults?

The financial implications for MNHOS are severe, potentially leading to major cuts. As you shape the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I implore you to prioritize the protection of charter school funding. Our students' futures depend on your support.

Sincerely,

Marnie

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Kate Olson and I am a special education teacher at Sojourner Truth Academy in north Minneapolis. I am also a debate coach and we have met several times with members of our debate team, students in your community. I am emailing to ask that you seriously reconsider the proposed budget cuts for Charter Schools and the students who attend them. The special education students in my school cannot afford to lose the supports that are in place at this time. Minnesota has always been a leader in the Charter School movement and our students are thriving because of this movement. We just cannot cut the funding to these students and the programs that are in place. We cannot put our future leaders in peril with these cuts.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Sojourner Truth Academy currently serves 61 students with special education IEPs ranging from students with learning disabilities, students on the Autism Spectrum, Early Childhood Special Education, students with emotional and behavioral concerns, physically-impaired students, and students with communication concerns. We are working on interventions with many other students who may be determined to have special education needs.

Students with special education needs cannot be left without the support they need. They have individual needs that are addressed by highly educated special education teachers. Special education is a challenging field which requires skills that not all teachers have. We have a large team to support all of our special education students' needs, including 5 student-facing teachers, 1 special education person whose focus is on completing all the paperwork that is required in special education (it's a lot), 1 instructional coach who works in collaboration with the special education teachers to provide high-quality, researched-based instruction. Additionally, we have a special education social worker, an occupational therapist, a speech-language pathologist, an early childhood teacher, physical therapist, other health disability consultant, and ASD consultants. It truly takes this village to provide these 61 students with the support needed to be on a level playing field with their general education peers.

If these proposed cuts are made, our support system will be impaired. Our students will not get the support they need to be on that level playing field. It will be the ultimate disservice to our students. We strive at STA, to have students in their least restrictive environment, to be all they can be. This will not happen with these cuts. They will be cheated. I have always said that my job is to work myself out of a job. I celebrate every student who is able to leave special

education because the services work. They grow, they learn, they leave special education, they succeed! We cannot let this fail because of budget cuts.

At a time when the federal government is already backing away from its responsibility to support students with disabilities, Minnesota should be stepping up—not stepping back.

I have been a special education teacher at Sojourner Truth Academy (STA) for 21 years. I have seen how well our school works for the students in our community. We have been embraced by the community. Previous students have come back to work as teachers in our school. Previous students have come back with their own children to enroll them so they can have the same amazing experience as an STA student. Our students need to be the priority at this time. I have watched our special education students thrive and get to a point that they no longer need special education services. Special education students who have gained confidence and joined the Debate team, which has grown their skills. We cannot let these students go back to slipping through the cracks.

Please don't add to the uncertainty we already feel about how public schools will be funded. We respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this turbulent time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Kate Olson  
**Special Education Teacher**

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Nelida Schroeder, and I am a Teacher at East Range Academy of Technology and Science School (Charter School)

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

- Our students are from 9th grade to 12th grade, from different levels of life, especially poverty, and special education.
- Erats is unique because we were able to help so many students and change their lives. In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a lot to us, or probably to close the School.
- The school population is large in students with low income and poverty

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Nelida Schoeder  
East Range Academy of Technology and Science School

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Drew Klitzke and I am an ELA teacher and advisor at Northwest Passage High School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *I advise a group of 16 high schoolers, ages 15-19. Of this class, 9 are on an IEP or 504 plan.*
- *At NWPHS, students learn through the project cycle, structuring their learning around their interests and specific abilities. We learn outside the classroom as often as possible. The students I serve tell me they have never felt so supported at any other public school.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean:

- *Fewer support staff to help special education students in the general classroom.*
- *Increased pressure on special education case managers, who are already overworked and underpaid.*
- *Increased pressure on general ed classroom teachers to meet their students needs, without proper training.*
- *Potential loss of families who rely on us to serve their students in special education.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Drew Klitzke.

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Drew Klitzke ~ he/him/his  
Advisor / ELA  
Northwest Passage High School

I have been a **PUBLIC SCHOOL** educator for 18 years and wanted to express my concern and opposition to eliminating nonpublic pupil aid. My understanding is that Governor Walz has doubled down on his budget proposal to eliminate these funds. I encourage you to pause and



think about the students impacted by this decision. Additionally, I encourage you to pause and think about **THE PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS** that this decision also directly impacts and the far-reaching consequences that this elimination leads to. For example, as a school counselor in St. Paul Public Schools, eliminating this funding would reduce our overall school counseling budget and eliminate 12 non-public positions. All of the counselors in these positions are tenured and eliminating this funding means that they would lose their current jobs and have to "bump" less tenured counselors across the district. This has a ripple effect for our counseling department as a whole. This is just the counselors, but the elimination of funding would also similarly impact our nurses. The services that these individuals provide are irreplaceable, and at a time when student mental health issues are on the rise, this seems ridiculous and irresponsible.

Cutting over \$50 million in aid per year would unfairly target these students and make educational choices unaffordable for many families. Nonpublic schools save the state nearly \$500 million annually by educating kids outside of the public system, and these cuts undermine that saving and the principle of supporting all students.

I respectfully request the opportunity to testify or share written testimony that will urge Governor Walz to drop this harmful proposal.

Thank you!

--

Amy Reichow Stoks, M.A., LPCC, NCC, RYT.  
Professional School Counselor- St. Paul Public Schools

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Matthew Lavrenz and I am an English Teacher at TrekNorth Jr. and Sr. High School in Bemidji, Minnesota.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

I have taught at a charter school for 8 years now, and the school I currently teach at serves about 38% (and constantly increasing) Special Education students. This number has increased consistently, year after year since I have been a teacher. In fact, one of my courses I teach has a classload of 76% special education students in a general ed setting.

Charter schools serve the communities they occupy by providing good alternatives to the area's public schools. In many public school settings, differentiated education needs cannot be met for the masses of students with special needs, learning disabilities, or social difficulties. Parents of those students turn to charter schools, who often have a smaller student:staff ratio, have generally smaller student populations, and have the means to provide personalized instruction to special needs students.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean less resources for our high needs students, in an area that is already struggling to keep up with needs. We have had trouble finding and keeping special education teachers, and even more trouble finding and keeping paraprofessionals due to high workload and low wages. Special Education students are the students that most need the resources offered in order to succeed in school and in their later adult life, and to cut funding to special education leaves this ever increasing demographic of students out high and dry. As an experienced teacher, I would not anticipate SPED numbers to decrease anytime soon, and cutting funding is the opposite of what we should be doing to serve the future of Minnesota.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. I thought that Minnesota prides itself on holding up education of all forms, and this proposal has me questioning that belief.

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Sincerely,  
Matthew David Lavrenz  
English Teacher  
TrekNorth Jr. and Sr. High School

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Leslie Arndt, and I am the School Social Worker at TrekNorth Jr. and Sr. High School in Bemidji, Minnesota. I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed budget cuts in HF2433, particularly the reductions to special education funding for chartered public schools.

At TrekNorth, we serve a diverse student population, including a significant number of students with special education needs. Many of our students come from low-income backgrounds, and we pride ourselves on fostering a supportive, individualized learning environment that helps them thrive academically and personally. Our commitment to small class sizes, strong student-teacher relationships, and a curriculum that includes outdoor education and service learning sets us apart and allows us to meet the unique needs of our students.

If these funding cuts are implemented, the impact on our students will be devastating. Reductions in special education funding and overall operating revenue would mean fewer specialized staff, limited

access to crucial support services, and increased class sizes. These cuts would directly undermine our ability to provide the tailored educational experience that so many of our students rely on for success.

For example, our special education team works closely with students who require individualized instruction, behavioral support, and mental health resources. Losing funding could mean cutting essential intervention programs, reducing paraprofessional support, and leaving our most vulnerable students without the assistance they need to reach their full potential. Additionally, our school already operates with limited resources compared to traditional public schools, and any further reductions would strain our ability to maintain our high standards of education.

As you craft the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I urge you to protect and preserve the critical state funding that charter school students depend on. Now, more than ever, they need your support to ensure their education remains equitable and effective. Please stand with us in prioritizing all Minnesota students, regardless of the type of public school they attend.

Sincerely,

**Leslie Arndt**  
Social Worker, LSW  
TrekNorth Junior and Senior High School  
Bemidji, Minnesota

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Jen Millard and I am a School Counselor at Terra Nova Charter School.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

**Which dramatically impacts our school where 40% of our students received Special Education support. We are doing great things to impact our students' academic and personal lives by giving them real world experiences in an individual and group format.**

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Dear Education Committee Members,

My name is Kevin Krieg, and I am the Director at **Riverway Learning Community PreK-12, District #4064** in Winona, Minnesota. We have approximately 80% of our students living below the poverty line and almost 50% of our students have an IEP for Special Education

services. Our SPED department is larger than either the Primary or Secondary schools, respectively, due to the extreme numbers and needs.

**The Winona area, in particular, has a large number of Charters (4) for a relatively small community, which means any cuts to the budget will disproportionately impact this small community as we serve a large number of the students locally with 4 out of 5 districts here.** We are proud of the public choices offered here, but we also compete directly with Cotter Schools which is funded nearly limitlessly by a Fortune 500 Company called Fastenal. As such, cutting Charters now only drives more students out of public education and into a system that removes funding from the public system while lacking the accountability and requirement to provide SPED services as a private school system.

Running a charter district on limited funding means I understand the state's budget challenges. As such, cutting critical funding for the 70,000 public school students and families who attend chartered public schools is unacceptable. Our students already receive significantly less funding than those in traditional districts, and these cuts would be devastating — and could force some schools to shut down entirely.

Please:

**Do NOT cut any funding to Charters.** It's bad for kids, the community, our district, and the message you are sending around the state about the value of public education.

**DO add Charters to all aspects of public education funding** so there is a more equitable funding of the public options.

This is the moment to invest more in our students, not less. We can't balance the state budget on the backs of **chartered public school students** and **students with disabilities**. These are public school students and they deserve to be treated fairly with the same level of funding and support as any other student in our state.

At a time when the federal government is already backing away from its responsibility to support students with disabilities, Minnesota's elected representatives should be stepping up—not stepping back.

**Please don't add to the uncertainty we already feel about how public schools will be funded. We respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this turbulent time.**

Sincerely,

--

Kevin Krieg  
Director of Riverway Learning Community District #4064

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Dr. Joan Little and I am an administrator at Career Pathways Public Charter school.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

Our students are grades 6 to 12, 87% live in poverty, 30% speak another language at home, and 25% are special education students.

Students choose Career Pathways because they were not successful in a traditional setting. We provide a personalized program that includes hands-on experiences with a flexible schedule to help them find their gifts and talents to finish school and be ready for college and careers.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean fewer hands-on learning experiences, less staff and larger class sizes, resulting in less learning.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joan Arbisi Little

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Claire C. Bruce, and I am the parent of two children who began attending Eagle Ridge Academy, an exceptional charter school, in the fall of 2024.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

My son, Reed, is currently in 5th grade at Eagle Ridge Academy. When he enrolled last fall, he was significantly behind and required enhanced support in reading and math, in addition to speech therapy. Thanks to the dedicated assistance from the highly qualified staff at Eagle Ridge, Reed has not only met his math expectations but has also earned As consistently. This newfound confidence and enjoyment in learning would not have been achievable without the support he received at Eagle Ridge Academy.

Reed's speech support has also been transformative; with the additional help, his vocabulary has expanded significantly, his pronunciation has improved markedly, and he is close to graduating from this support. The special education interventions have bolstered his reading comprehension, and he is now achieving A's and B's across all his classes, which has greatly enhanced his self-esteem and confidence.

Access to this school has positively impacted my family's lives. My children have discovered a love for learning and the ability to excel when they apply themselves. Without the support from Eagle Ridge, such progress would likely not have been realized.

My daughter, Mila, is in 6th grade at Eagle Ridge. When she began this past fall, she was also significantly behind and received the challenges and support necessary for her growth. Before entering Eagle Ridge, she had never experienced taking a test or completing homework. She now engages with topics such as 'the Ides of March' and references classical literature like The Iliad and The Odyssey. Her academic achievements reflect her remarkable progress, which can be attributed to the outstanding education and support provided by Eagle Ridge Academy.

Any reduction in special education funding or operating revenue for our students would result in the elimination or significant decrease of essential supports for my children. I am concerned that their academic growth and enthusiasm for school would be adversely affected without the necessary resources to help them succeed and prepare for their futures.

As you work on the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to safeguard this vital state funding for charter school students during this challenging period. Our students need your steadfast support now more than ever.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Claire Carleton Bruce, BAN, RN, PHN, CCM  
Parent of 2 students at Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is John Houghland, and I am a parent of 4 students at Eagle Ridges Academy (ERA).

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- My children include:
  - Son, age 13, 7<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Son, age 12, 5<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Daughter, age 10, 4<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Daughter, age 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
  
- Public charter schools already receive less funding than their non-charter peers. Before this change is made, please consider the following key points:
  - ERA is a long-standing, successful charter school that serves a highly diverse and growing K-12 student body
  - Despite already receiving less funding than non-charter public schools, ERA's classical education curriculum and positive learning environment has resulted in:
    - 96% graduation rates
    - Top academic performance in MN

- High retention rates
- Continued growth in the student body (and desire from area parents for facility expansion to accommodate a larger student body)

At ERA, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean:

- ERA being unable to expand facilities to serve additional students and meet rising demand from area parents and students
- ERA being unable to meet the needs of our broad array of special needs students

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

John Houghland  
Parent (grades 2, 4, 5, 7)  
Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and House Education Finance Committee Members:

My name is Vashti Martens and I am a teacher at Northwest Passage High School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a noticeable decrease in the resources and out of classroom experiences we are able to provide for our students

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

***Vashti Martens (Pearson)***

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Ismail Ahmed, and I am the Director of Operations at Twin Cities International Schools in Minneapolis.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to draw your attention to the profoundly problematic cuts to chartered public school students, including reductions to special education funding.**

- *We serve East African students who depend on public education. About 10% of these students are in the Special Education program.*
- *We cater to first-generation American students whose parents trust us to provide a comprehensive and competitive education to help them sustain themselves.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean less specialized instruction for these vulnerable groups, a lack of highly qualified teachers, and many other resources used by the funds currently available for them.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

*Ismail Ahmed*

Ismail Ahmed  
Director of Operations  
Twin Cities International Schools

Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, and other Esteemed Officials,

My name is Linda, and I am writing to you as a mother whose child has thrived in a charter school and receives special education. MNOHS has been a place where my child has received the tailored support, care, and opportunities she needed to reach her full potential. As a parent, there is nothing more important than ensuring that my child has access to the best possible education, and this school has provided just that.

The **proposed funding cuts to chartered public schools and special education** deeply concern me. These schools **already receive less funding** compared to traditional district schools, and further reductions would have dire consequences—not only for the students who rely on them, but also for the teachers, staff, and communities that these schools sustain. My child's school, and others like it, could be forced to close, leaving families like mine without access to the educational environment our children depend on.

What's more, these funding cuts jeopardize the livelihoods of the incredible educators and staff who make charter schools such special places. These professionals go above and beyond to support our children, and the prospect of job losses would not only hurt families but also weaken the fabric of our educational system.



**I urge you to stand up for the families, educators, and students who rely on charter schools and special education.** Minnesota must lead the way in championing strong, equitable public education.

Thank you,

Linda

My name is Kevin, and I am the parent of a student who receives **vital special education services at a charter school** here in Minnesota.

As you consider HF 2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply **problematic cuts** to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to **special education funding**.

At her current charter school, my daughter has received **life-changing special education and disability support** that her previous, non-chartered schools simply couldn't provide, largely due to overcrowded classrooms and overburdened administrators. Here, however, her dedicated special education teachers have gone above and beyond, equipping her with the tools she needs to thrive and build a meaningful future.

**Cuts to special education funding and operating revenue at her charter school would lead to significant reductions that would directly harm her and other vulnerable students in need of a high-school education.** These proposed cuts would only deepen the existing challenges faced by public education and **jeopardize the futures of children** who rely on these vital resources.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, **we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
Kevin

My name is Cristine Nelson, and I am a parent of a student with special needs at Minnesota Online High School.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

My daughter is 17-years-old. She is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and anxiety. She found it very difficult to learn in a traditional brick and mortar school setting. She attended Farmington High School until she transferred to Minnesota Online School (MNOHS)

halfway through her Sophomore year. The large class sizes, the structure of her schedule, and the bullying she experienced at FHS created barriers to her learning, and she was stressed and overwhelmed. The transition to MNOHS was seamless. They offered special education courses, along with traditional courses, and they offered support and flexibility that instilled a love of learning and commitment to the work. Her special education teacher and all of the teachers and administrative staff have been incredibly responsive to questions and concerns. Both my husband and I have been so grateful with how MNOHS has helped our daughter be a successful learner. Without MNOHS, I'm not certain she would have stayed in school, and her mental health would surely have suffered.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for the students would mean major cuts to Minnesota Online High School.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect the critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students, including my daughter, need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,  
Cristine Nelson

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Lynn Delesha and I am the Librarian at Twin Cities Academy a charter school located at 690 Birmingham St. Saint Paul, MN 55106.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a severe reduction in quality education programming serving students with special needs.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
**Lynn Delesha**

Dear Officials,

I am a family member of a student at a charter high school in MN. I'm reaching out with deep concerns about the proposed budget outlined in HF2433, which includes cuts to funding for charter schools and special education programs. These reductions would have significant negative effects on students, schools, and staff across the state.

My family member benefits greatly from the specialized education support she receives to address her learning disabilities. This assistance is vital to her academic success, allowing her to thrive and receive an education.

However, the proposed reductions in funding for both charter schools and special education threaten the ability of charter schools to continue providing these essential special education services. These cuts would undermine the progress of countless students who rely on these resources to succeed and get an education.

I urge you to protect critical funding for charter schools and special education programs in the budget. We are counting on you to ensure that all Minnesota students, regardless of their unique needs, have access to the education and support they deserve.

Sincerely,

Nick

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Yuliya Matusevich and I am a parent of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Eagle Ridge Academy, Minnetonka, MN.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I urge you to recognize the deeply concerning cuts to chartered public school students—particularly reductions in special education funding. These cuts would have a profound impact on families like mine and the thousands of students who rely on high-quality charter school education in Minnesota.**

My family immigrated to the United States four years ago, and we were incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to enroll our children at **Eagle Ridge Academy, Minnetonka, MN (hereinafter referred to as "ERA")**—one of the highest-rated schools in the state. My daughter graduated from ERA last year and was successfully admitted to the University of Minnesota, a testament to the exceptional education she received. My son is currently an 8th-grade student at

the school. As a parent, I credit much of my daughter's academic success to the rigorous, high-quality education that ERA provides.

Eagle Ridge Academy offers a classical education model, prioritizing academic excellence, critical thinking, and character development. The dedication of the teachers and staff is unparalleled—they hold their students to high academic standards and work tirelessly to ensure their success. However, as a small charter school with limited funding, ERA already faces financial challenges. Unlike larger district schools, we have fewer resources for extracurricular programs and rely on a modest selection of athletic and enrichment activities — many of which require additional fees that not all families can afford.

Beyond academics, ERA has become a home to my children in ways that extend far beyond the classroom. In fact, when our family considered moving and potentially enrolling them in another school, they were adamantly against it. They love their school so deeply that they couldn't imagine being anywhere else. Their passion for learning and the friendships they've built at ERA have made it clear to us as parents that we must do everything in our power to keep them here. So much so that when choosing a place to live, we made sure that our home remained within reach of ERA—because providing our children with an excellent education is one of the most important investments we can make.

That is why the proposed funding cuts are so troubling. Reductions in special education funding and general operating revenue would have devastating consequences for our students. These cuts could mean:

- **Losing highly qualified, passionate educators** who are integral to student success. When schools cannot offer competitive salaries, they risk losing talented teachers to better-funded districts.
- **Limited access to academic support services**, particularly for students who need specialized assistance.
- **Fewer extracurricular and enrichment opportunities**, which are already limited compared to larger schools.
- **A direct impact on student achievement**, as fewer resources mean larger class sizes and reduced individualized attention.

Minnesota has long been a leader in educational excellence, and charter schools like Eagle Ridge Academy play a vital role in providing families with high-quality alternatives to traditional public schools. Charter schools serve diverse communities and often operate with fewer resources while delivering outstanding academic outcomes. It is unjust to ask charter students to bear the burden of budget cuts, especially in a time of economic uncertainty and inflation, when families and schools are already struggling to keep up.

Our children are our future—not just the future of our families, but of this country. The education we provide them today will shape the doctors, teachers, engineers, economists, accountants, senators, caregivers, entrepreneurs, scientists, and thinkers of tomorrow. The strength of our communities, our economy, and our democracy depends on ensuring that every child has access to the highest quality education possible—regardless of whether they attend a traditional district school or a charter school.

**As you shape the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect and prioritize funding for charter school students.  
Our children deserve nothing less!**

Thank you for your time and commitment to Minnesota's students.

Sincerely,  
Yuliya Matusevich  
Parent, Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Travis Michels and I am a parent of a student at Eagle Ridge Academy.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding. My son is in second grade and is on an IEP for reading and math.**

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Travis Michels  
Parent  
Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Leah Schwenke, and I am a parent at Eagle Ridge Academy in Minnetonka.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

My son, who is in 8th grade, has attended Eagle Ridge since kindergarten. He has a terminal illness and needs the consistent and extraordinary care that Eagle Ridge Academy's special ed program has been able to provide all these years. It scares this mom's heart to think that my son's educational experience would be so affected by these budget cuts. His mental health is fragile but knowing his special ed teacher, who is dear to our family, and his friends are all at school is worth more than any budget savings.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Leah Schwenke  
Parent of 3 kids at Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Jacquelyn Kerrigan and I am a parent at Northwest Passage Charter School.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

I currently have 2 children enrolled in this school. My 17 year old feels safer here compared to larger schools due to how they identify. My 14 yr old has ADHD, anxiety, and depression. She frequently needs accommodations.

This school is hands on. They are a project based learning school. They spend plenty of time outside of the classroom learning about how what they are learning actually relates to the world.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean less accommodations for students like mine.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Kerrigan  
Parent  
Northwest Passage Charter School

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Nadia Latvala, and I am a senior at Harbor City International Charter School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

I am currently a senior, and throughout my experience at the school I have found a very strong community and sense of belonging that I haven't found at other schools. Something that makes my school great is the ability to access special education for those who need it, and get the extra help they need to succeed at school. I have many family members and friends who have benefited from this assistance, and would struggle a lot without it.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean losing so many of the aspects that make my school's community and curriculum so strong. My school has already struggled financially throughout the years, and this budget cut could cause dire issues for the school.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

[Nadia Latvala](#)

Harbor City International Charter

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Jen Rooney and I am a parent to two children at International Spanish Immersion Academy (ISLA) an International Baccalaureate (IB) charter school in Edina/Bloomington.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *My children are in the second grade and soon-to-be Kindergarten at ISLA. The second grader did not know any Spanish prior to attending ISLA and is now a fluent Spanish speaker. Due to her learning to read in Spanish and English, she is behind her peers in reading in both languages. She has been receiving reading intervention to gain the*

*support she needs in hopes that she will catch up to her peers. I would be deeply saddened if funding caused the intervention services and/or special education to be more difficult to access.*

- *ISLA is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. The organization works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. Which is so needed in our world today!*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Jen Rooney  
Concerned Parent  
International Spanish Language Academy

My name is Kristin Parks, and I am a parent of 3 students at Eagle Ridge Academy (ERA).

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- My children include:
  - Daughter, age 11, 5<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Daughter, age 9, 3rd grade
  - Daughter, age 7, 1st grade
- Public charter schools already receive less funding than their non-charter peers. Before this change is made, please consider the following key points:
  - ERA is a long-standing, successful charter school that serves a highly diverse and growing K-12 student body
  - Despite already receiving less funding than non-charter public schools, ERA's classical education curriculum and positive learning environment has resulted in:
    - 96% graduation rates



- Top academic performance in MN
- High retention rates
- Continued growth in the student body (and desire from area parents for facility expansion to accommodate a larger student body)

At ERA, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean:

- ERA being unable to expand facilities to serve additional students and meet rising demand from area parents and students
- ERA being unable to meet the needs of our broad array of special needs students

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Kristin Parks, Parent (students in grades 1, 3, 5), Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Tiffany, and I am a mother of two teens at Harbor City International School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *One of my teens is in the 9th grade. They are on the autism spectrum. They previously attended public school. As the years went on they struggled. They struggled with teachers in junior high, even though they are extremely smart. (The doctor who diagnosed my child said they were MENSA smart.) In regular public school we had a 504 and it was still a struggle. I had to take the time to have many discussions with most of their teachers and many meetings with the counselor. Sometimes it was successful, sometimes not. It was a struggle even though there was a 504. (My child didn't want an IEP because they didn't want to be viewed as different from their peers, and I respected my child's needs.) And I would always think, what about the kids who needed more help than mine? How are things going for them?*
- *My 9th grader switched to Harbor City International Charter School when they were able to as that is where my oldest child had attended. The reason my oldest, who is now a senior and valedictorian, switched to this charter school was because of how they handled the pandemic at the time (with facts and what would keep students and staff safe) and it ended up being the best move. We started the school with a 504 and my 9th grader is excelling. Straight A's*

*currently. My child is motivated. The teachers pay attention and they care. The students look up to them. Harbor City incorporates arts, music and theater into their school. They give the students freedom to express themselves in ways that the general public schools do not. My child doesn't fear being made fun of at school by other students the way they used to, as this school in particular is known as a great school for kids on the spectrum.*

- *The teachers here respect the students. They listen to their needs and are open to making changes as needed.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean

- *Losing teachers due to financial cuts. Harbor City International Charter School is a small school where the classrooms are not too big for teachers to handle. With less teachers, class sizes will grow (which we all know isn't good for students or teachers). Or, classes that keep the kids interested (arts, music, theater, psychology) will be cut as well.*
- *Harbor City is a school located in an old building in downtown Duluth, MN. The building needs upkeep. With cuts in funding, that will affect the school structure itself. Will the school be able to survive this?*
- *Harbor City is just about to open up to junior high students for the first time in the fall of 2025. All of the work and budgeting they have done and budget cuts could definitely affect that. I wish this school had been available in junior high for my kids.*
- *As a parent experiencing Harbor City with my kids, this is a great school. The school is more accommodating than any school in the area for kids on the spectrum from what we have experienced.*
- *It would be a real shame for the city of Duluth, MN to have this charter school compromised. It is a special place with so many talented and intelligent kids with staff who treat them with respect and understanding.*
- *Most people can't afford to send their kids to private school. When your child doesn't fit in great at general public school, it is great to have an alternative space to learn and excel.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
Tiffany Lefler-Zifko  
Parent  
Harbor City International Charter School

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Committee Members,

My name is Fikadu Alema, and I reside in Shakopee, MN. I am a father of three. One of my children has a developmental disability and attends Shakopee Public Schools, while my two other children attend Eagle Ridge Academy, a charter school in the city of Minnetonka.

It recently came to my attention through the school that Governor Tim Walz has proposed a budget cut for schools, which deeply alarmed me and prompted me to write to you.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to highlight the deeply concerning reductions that would affect charter public school students—particularly cuts to special education funding and general operating revenue.

At our school, such reductions would mean fewer staff to support students with unique needs, larger class sizes, and decreased access to essential resources that help every child reach their full potential.

As you work on the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this especially challenging time. Our students are depending on your support now more than ever.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,  
Fikadu Alema, Ph.D.

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Micaela Douglas and I am a parent at Eagle Ridge Academy, a charter school in Minnetonka.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding. My daughters are in 7th and 8th grade and are receiving an excellent education. Eagle Ridge Academy has provided them with an excellent education, fostered a love of learning and is preparing them to think independently and make thoughtful, informed decisions throughout their lives.

We are so thankful that we have the option of charter schools in MN. Charter schools can provide an alternative public education to children who are not succeeding in their assigned

district school. It is especially important to have this option for families who cannot afford to move to a more affluent neighborhood and those who cannot afford private education.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,  
Micaela Douglas  
Parent at Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kristyan Mjolsnes, and I am a mother of three children at Eagle Ridge Academy, one of Minnesota's top-performing charter schools serving a highly diverse student body across the Twin Cities metro area.

As you review HF2433 and the Governor's proposed budget, I respectfully urge you to reconsider the significant cuts to chartered public schools, including reductions in general operating and special education funding. These cuts would have far-reaching and deeply harmful effects on the 70,000 public charter school students in Minnesota.

Our school already operates on a lean budget, and like many charter schools, we have limited capacity to serve students with significant special needs due to inadequate funding. Further reductions would only deepen these challenges and limit our ability to provide meaningful support for all learners. This not only impacts the students directly but also places additional strain on educators and families who are doing their best to provide a high-quality education with already limited resources.

Families have chosen our school because it offers a strong academic environment, a supportive community, and a commitment to equity. But equity should not mean taking away from one group of public school students to fund another. Our state should be prioritizing legal resident children and families who have made long-term investments in their communities and their children's education.

As you craft the Education Finance Omnibus bill, please protect funding for charter schools. These are public school students, and they deserve the same support and opportunity as any other student in Minnesota.

Sincerely,  
Kristyan Mjolsnes

Dear Co-Chair Youakim,

First, our MAAP STARS Student Leadership Team would like to thank you for your service to the State of Minnesota on behalf of all students. We are respectfully asking you to hear House File 1966 (Berg) that would provide \$55,000 to continue to support the MAAP STARS Leadership program.

Alternative education has been incredibly important to us because we were not thriving in a traditional classroom setting. Alternative education has allowed us to receive personalized attention and support for our academic journeys. We know it has helped us continue to learn and stay on track for graduation.

As MAAP STARS Student Leaders, we have participated in this training program which has helped us build academic, social, and professional skills for our future. Program funding from the State helps make this leadership opportunity accessible for more students regardless of their financial situation. State funds have also helped offset transportation and conference costs for students to attend the state-wide STARS events. It helped create a STARS Advisory Group to MDE so we can give direct feedback and suggestions about alternative education student concerns and issues. We've held monthly virtual meetings as well as attended some in-person.

We are writing today to ask you to hear our funding bill request in your committee so that we can continue to reach out to even more alternative education students in Minnesota. Thank You for your time to consider our asking to have our bill heard.

Sincerely,

Karl Bauer, Fergus Falls Area Learning Center, Fergus Falls, MN  
Angelo Fisherman, Voyageurs Expeditionary School, Bemidji, MN  
Lainey Houts, Northfield Area Learning Center, Northfield, MN  
Alexandra Miller, White Bear Lake Area Learning Center, White Bear Lake, MN  
Amai Rahn, Paladin Career & Tech High School, Coon Rapids, MN  
Shana Rudowski, Tokata Learning Center, Shakopee, MN  
Owen Litecky, Northwest Passage High School, Coon Rapids, MN  
Bella Stensrud-Eubanks, Empower Learning Center, Hinckley, MN

Dear Chairs, Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Erin Schmitz, and I am a special education teacher at Eagle Ridge Academy.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

I teach special education K-12 math at Eagle Ridge Academy in Minnetonka. I have a master's in special education with licenses to teach Elementary Education, pre-primary, Social Studies 5-8, Academic and Behavioral Strategist, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Physical and Health Disabilities. My students thrive on the smaller class size that charter schools offer for their special education students. Their parents chose to bring their child to Eagle Ridge because of the small class sizes, mission of the school, and dedication of the staff. I have had multiple parents move their children to Eagle Ridge because they heard of the dedication of the special education staff. When I first started at Eagle Ridge 11 years ago, there were six case managers and six paras. We are now up to eight case managers and 12 paras. Our department is growing due to our reputation.

I work with 35 students daily. Most of my students receive services due to Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disability, and Other Health Disorders. I also serve two students that receive services due to Physical Impairment. Their parents chose Eagle Ridge Academy due to the smaller school to navigate and we can give them the unique services that they require. I have the same students year after year. We can build from the previous year quicker than if they had a new teacher every year. For example, I have a senior this year that I have been working with since he was in 5th grade.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean larger class sizes for students that thrive on specialized instruction. Our caseloads will increase; therefore, students will not get the individualized attention that they need/deserve. We would not be able to buy the curriculum, materials, and other necessary items for my students to get the education that they deserve.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
**Erin Schmitz**  
Special Education Teacher

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Brooklyn Erie and I am a senior in highschool at Harbor City International School. Harbor City is an alternative charter school focused on inclusion,community engagement,creative expression,and global perspective. As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding. In my 4 years at Harbor City I have not only thrived academically but had the space to grow, and learn what it means to grow into the person I wish to be in my adulthood. Harbor City has been a safe space for so many students, especially with help of our special education staff and students. Harbor City wouldn't be what it is without them. Every single student and CHILD regardless of learning ability and needs shouldn't have to suffer due to the people in power's lack of prioritizing education for all. Some students require extra help from adults, and that isn't their fault, Harbor City honors that. But

cutting the funding means these students will suffer greatly for years to come. Please help and allow my peers and all future students to have the privilege of the safe space I did. Allow the special education staff here to continue to change students' lives, and do what they are passionate and good at. As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Brooklyn Erie

Senior

Harbor City International School

Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, and Esteemed Officials,

My name is Amy, and I am writing to you as someone who has witnessed the life-changing impact that charter schools can have on students and their families. My sibling attends a charter school in Minnesota and thrives there in ways that weren't possible in the traditional school setting she was in prior. Her previous school was not able to accommodate her disabilities and IEP to the extent she needed. **The support and opportunities provided by this charter school are pivotal to her success.**

However, I am **deeply troubled by the proposed funding cuts to chartered public schools and special education**. These schools already operate with **significantly less funding** than traditional district schools, and further cuts would have devastating consequences—not just for students, but also for the dedicated educators, staff, and community members who make these schools thrive. The reality is that these cuts could lead to school closures, forcing students to lose the environment in which they excel, while teachers and staff face the very real risk of job loss.

Charter schools in Minnesota are lifelines for families who depend on their innovative and personalized approaches. To cut funding now would dismantle these opportunities, impact thousands of families, and destabilize communities that value these schools as crucial public education providers.

This is not the time to retreat from investing in our students and their educators. We cannot allow the state budget to be balanced on the backs of 70,000 charter school students and the teachers and staff who dedicate their lives to educating them. Every public-school student deserves equitable funding, and every educator deserves the job security that allows them to continue making a difference.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Amy

I am a family member of a student at a charter school in Minnesota.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to draw your attention to the concerning cuts impacting chartered public-school students. These reductions, which include cuts to special education funding, are deeply troubling.

My sister is a dedicated student at a charter high school who relies on special education services due to her learning disabilities. She has worked hard to overcome challenges, and the support provided by her school has been instrumental in her progress.

Her charter school's commitment to personalized education and its ability to cater to diverse learning needs is what makes it so unique. The school provides resources, flexibility, and individual support, ensuring that students like my little sister thrive academically.

For our family, these proposed cuts to special education funding and operating revenue would be extremely detrimental, creating significant challenges for her school and its ability to continue supporting students with learning disabilities—these students don't deserve to get left behind.

As you finalize the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to safeguard essential funding for charter school students and special education programs. Protecting both is critical to ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed, especially during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Laura

**Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members,**

My name is Bob Sparkins, and I am a parent and the incoming PTO Chair for 2025–2026 at International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA), a public charter school offering K–5 Spanish Immersion.

Today, you are scheduled to consider **HF2433**, the Governor's proposed budget.



I understand that budget decisions are complex, but I urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to charter schools. These reductions would have serious consequences for our students—particularly those with special needs—and would affect the entire school community.

Key concerns include:

**Negative impact on students with special needs**, which creates ripple effects:

- Lower teacher morale
- Increased challenges for peers in the classroom
- Heightened tension between parents and staff

**Our family's experience at ISLA:**

- We have two children at ISLA, ages 6 and 8.
- While they haven't needed an IEP or 504 Plan, their classmates do—and they benefit from those services being in place.
- One of our kids has received reading and math intervention (RTI) over the past 3 years, which has helped her stay on pace with her peers.

**Why ISLA matters:**

- ISLA is a **100% Spanish Immersion school**, giving our kids a bilingual advantage in an increasingly global world.
- It's also an **International Baccalaureate (IB) school**, supporting intellectual, emotional, and psychological development.
- Our teachers consistently rank among the best in the Twin Cities, according to Niche.
- State revenue provides more than 80% of our operational budget

**If operational and special education funding is reduced:**

- We will lose vital staff.
- Class sizes will increase.
- Educational quality will decline.
- Staff burnout and turnover will rise as expectations continue to grow with fewer resources.

**In closing:** Please protect critical state funding for charter school students as you craft the final Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Immersion schools like ISLA—and other secular charter schools with specialized models—need your support now more than ever.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Bob Sparkins**

Parent & Incoming PTO Chair, International Spanish Language Academy

*Dear Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan,*

*My name is Heidi Tesfaye, and I am on the Board of Directors at Twin Cities International Schools, 277 12th Ave N. Minneapolis, MN 55401.*

*While I understand the state's budget challenges, cutting critical funding for the 70,000 public school students and families who attend chartered public schools is unacceptable. Chartered public school students already receive significantly less funding than those in traditional districts, and these cuts would be devastating — and could force some schools to shut down entirely.*

*This is the moment to invest more in our students, not less. We can't balance the state budget on the backs of **chartered public-school students** and **students with disabilities**. These are public school students, and they deserve to be treated fairly and receive the same level of funding and support as any other student in our state.*

*At a time when the federal government is already backing away from its responsibility to support students with disabilities, Minnesota's Governor should be stepping up—not stepping back.*

*About 20% of our students and families depend on IDEA services, and these cuts will affect the services provided to them and the wonderful work the teachers and providers do.*

**Please don't add to the uncertainty about how public schools will be funded. We respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this turbulent time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

*Heidi Tesfaye*

Dear Officials,

I am a family member of a student at a charter high school in MN. I'm reaching out with deep concerns about the proposed budget outlined in HF2433, which includes cuts to funding for charter schools and special education programs. These reductions would have significant negative effects on students, schools, and staff across the state.

My family member benefits greatly from the specialized education support she receives to address her learning disabilities. This assistance is vital to her academic success, allowing her to thrive and receive an education.

However, the proposed reductions in funding for both charter schools and special education threaten the ability of charter schools to continue providing these essential special education

services. These cuts would undermine the progress of countless students who rely on these resources to succeed and get an education.

I urge you to protect critical funding for charter schools and special education programs in the budget. We are counting on you to ensure that all Minnesota students, regardless of their unique needs, have access to the education and support they deserve.

Sincerely,

Nick

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

As a parent and school board member at Eagle Ridge Academy, my name is Elliott Loutsch, and I am deeply troubled by the proposed cuts to chartered public school students within the Governor's HF2433 budget, including critical reductions to special education funding.

My daughters, currently juniors and sophomores at ages 17 and 15, have been proud students of Eagle Ridge Academy since the third and fourth grades. The exceptional Classical education they have received has fostered their growth into remarkable scholars and thinkers, well-prepared for their future.

The proposed funding reductions, potentially amounting to a \$300,000 to \$500,000 annual loss for Eagle Ridge Academy, would directly undermine our ability to provide the high-quality education our students deserve. This includes impacting our capacity to attract and retain excellent teachers, cultivate expertise in our unique Classical approach, and crucially, maintain a robust special education program.

Therefore, as you formulate the Education Finance Omnibus bill, I implore you to safeguard this essential state funding for charter school students. Their continued success relies on your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Elliott Loutsch  
Parent  
Vice Chair Eagle Ridge Academy Board of Directors  
Eagle Ridge Academy

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Ryan Webber and I am a Special Ed Department Secretary at TrekNorth Jr. and Sr. High School in Bemidji, Minnesota.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

TrekNorth serves 6-12 students in Bemidji, Minnesota. Approximately 40% of our population receives special education services. I have seen students thrive at Trek who would otherwise be confined to one room in the local public school. I have seen students with no functional verbal skills flourish and be chosen by their peers to speak at commencement. I have seen students with major behavior issues learn how to interact with their peers and go on to attend college and get jobs in our community.

These students were able to do this because of the specialized attention they receive at TrekNorth. While it is possible they would achieve the same results in the district, the lack of personalized attention would make this difficult. We are able to cater to our students in a way that the traditional public school cannot.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean less staff, leading to larger classrooms, and the inability to help these students function and succeed. Less staff would lead to more behavior issues, causing more staff burnout and turnover. In short, our students would be less successful; cutting funding will only increase problems, not help.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Ryan Webber  
Special Ed Department Secretary  
TrekNorth Jr & Sr High School

My name is Kathryn Yaeger and I am a parent of Lucy (age 18) at Minnesota Online High School (MNOHS).

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

Without MNOHS, I'm not sure my daughter would be here today. After suffering severe anxiety before Covid and then dealing with many health problems, brick and mortar public school was not in the cards. MNOHS literally saved her high school education and quite possibly her life, with a 504 plan and wonderfully, supportive, available at any time teachers who truly worked with us as parents and with Lucy, to be sure that she was reaching her full potential in an otherwise discouraging time. Charter schools, and the funding for them are of the greatest importance. Not just for my child but for the many who choose charter schools for a plethora of learning opportunities. As the younger kids come up into high school, those that started school during Covid and shortly after are going to need resources, such as MNOHS. It's important to keep the funding available for charter schools.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean major cuts to Minnesota Online High School.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
Kathryn Yaeger

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Mark Bjornrud and I am a Director at Schoolcraft Learning Community in Bemidji MN.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

We are a K-8 chartered public school up here in Bemidji. We serve 200 students and their families and have done so for the last 25 years. Approximately 25% of our students are a part of our Special Education program with Individual Education Plans (IEP).

We are able to offer a unique atmosphere with our smaller class sizes and 26 acres of woods to support an emphasis on outdoor education and all of the benefits that it has on students. Our setup also allows us to run our special education program to meet the student needs while maintaining a strong connection for the students within their class and not always separated out.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean significant changes to all of our programming. As a small school cuts like this can have drastic and immediate implications on our ability to serve our students. This would likely mean decreases in staffing and in a small school it is much harder to absorb even a decrease of one.

I have already had parents with students that have high needs IEPs reaching out concerned about what these budget cuts would mean for the services that their students receive. Here is a portion of one email I received on Monday.

"As fellow educators and parents of a child with special needs, we are desperate to get their [Governor and legislators regarding proposed budget] attention and seek the necessary decisions that will allow SLC students to continue to thrive. Schoolcraft has been an answer to prayer in an area of our great state where the support like he has can be so hard to come by."

We are proud to be able to provide that type of support and we hope to be able to continue to do so, but these cuts would create a significant impact on our ability to do so.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Mark Bjornrud  
Director of Operations  
**Schoolcraft Learning Community**

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

I am the parent of a MN public school student enrolled in a public charter school, specifically Minnesota Online High School.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

Minnesota Online High School has been a wonderful educational choice for our family, and I would despair to see its budget unfairly cut in ways that may harm the current and future potential of the school. These are MN public school students, and they deserve funding and support from the state that is on par with any other public school student. The budget is particularly appalling in that it targets special education funding for charter schools specifically. My children do not need special education services, but I am grateful to have them at a school and in a state that values an equitable education for all. Please choose to preserve charter school and special education funding for these students.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Tanya Hoskin  
Rochester, MN

My name is Sarah Stachovich and I am the Financial Director at East Range Academy of Technology & Science in Mt. Iron, MN..

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *Our charter school, East Range Academy of Technology & Science serves 9th-12th grade students from a 30-mile radius (some drive from even further) of our building. Ninety-two*

*percent of our students are low income/high risk.*

- *Our school offers students of all different levels and learning styles. We pride ourselves on tailored support of all students. We offer a variety of programs such as standard education, special education, personalized learning environment, afternoon school, online credit recovery, and so much more.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean taking away the right to learn for all students regardless of status.

- *If you take away special education funding you're taking away paraprofessionals and special education teachers. There are some students who do not need the special education services, but it's becoming a more common thing to see in schools. Until we can support all of our students we aren't doing enough.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

**Sarah Stachovich  
Financial Director  
East Range Academy of Technology & Science**

My name is Eujeana Hinkle and I am a special education teacher at Northwest Passage High School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

**I work with students 18 to 21 that are on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Many of the students I work with have struggled at past schools and came to Northwest Passage High School due to community, opportunities and small class sizes. They have felt unseen and lost at the large school districts. At Northwest Passage High School they have found a safe and supportive school community.**

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean students not getting the services and educational opportunities that they need to be successful. Students would not have the support in place through staffing to flourish and reach their full potential.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
***Eujeana Hinkle***

My name is Jodee Lund, and I am the Director at Glacial Hills Elementary School in Starbuck.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

At Glacial Hills Elementary, we serve preschool through 6th-grade students, with over 58% of our student body falling within the free and reduced lunch subgroup, and approximately 24% receiving special education services. Our students come from a diverse set of backgrounds, and we are committed to meeting their unique needs.

We take great pride in our student-centered and environmental approach to education. With a focus on community-based and project-based learning, we create a learning environment that allows each child to thrive. Over 65% of our staff have experience teaching in residential traditional schools and now call GHES their home. We don't expect teachers or students to "fit in a box," but instead, we empower them to learn and grow in ways that suit their individual needs.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a significant loss in the support and resources we can offer. These cuts would affect our ability to provide tailored interventions, specialized services, and the necessary accommodations that our students depend on. Our teachers may be forced to reduce individualized instruction, and students requiring additional support could face delays or interruptions in receiving the services they need to succeed.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever. Without this funding, we risk undermining the educational opportunities that have allowed our students to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your continued support of our charter school community.

Sincerely,  
Jodee Lund  
Director, Glacial Hills Elementary

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:



My name is Shauna Jaworski and I am the parent of a student that attends Northwest Passage High school in Coon Rapids, MN. My child also receives special education.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

My child is 17 years old. In the past has been diagnosed with ADHD and other behavioral issues. My child did not excel in public school. After entering Northwest passage High School, he has exceeded all expectations and made a great change in our lives and his future. Northwest passage High school views every child as an individual. They individually spend time and effort creating plans to help students succeed. They create strong relationships with each student, unlike public schools. Some students learn in different ways and Northwest Passage gives opportunities to learn in a variety of different ways. They have project based learning, seminars and expeditions. Expeditions are unique experiences, fully funded by fundraisers held by the school. These expeditions cover so many areas and give students real life experience and knowledge.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean \$20,000 in cuts just to Northwest Passage High School alone. Also it would mean a 10 percent reduction to unreimbursed special education costs.

Without the help of Northwest Passage High school, My son wouldn't be on track to graduate. Before he was bullied, had fights, refused to go to school, was so far behind that it almost seemed like there was no hope for change. Until Someone suggested this school. Actually it was a medical professional who did. The school changed my son's life, outlook and has made him a productive member of society. He plans on college, possibly for Physics! He loves going to school, has a wonderful friend group and participates in everything possible. This was all made possible by this school. I've never made a better choice. Without this school who knows where we would be now. I am so grateful.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Shauna Lynn Jaworski  
Parent of a special education student at Northwest Passage High School  
Vice President of Sales - Duane Jaworski & Associates

My name is \_Amanda Enright\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a \_\_\_the mother of Kinley Enright at Eagle Ridge Academy

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

I'm a very concerned parent writing to you very upset this morning. My daughter is in 6th grade at eagle ridge academy charter school.

My daughter had to switch to charter school after she was assaulted in shakopee public school in the bathroom. She had a concussion and PTSD from this incident on top of her processing disorder disabilities. She has had an IEP since she was 3 years old. Public school refused to provide her a para all day, threatened her safety and didn't provide her with a proper IEP or para all day. Her charter school does all this. Unless you are personally paying for her to go to Groves academy or Arete academy this isn't an option for her! Safety is a number one human necessity and public school could NOT do this for my daughter.

The funding isn't going to special ed kids at public schools its going to the administration.

I'm extremely upset and would love to talk to you, I've lived in Minnesota my entire life. I've had to stand up and fight for my special needs daughter on multiple occasions since 2019. We shouldn't have to fight this hard to keep our special needs kids safe.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our mean my special education daughter would no longer be safe.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
Amanda Enright  
Parent of special needs daughter Kinley Enright

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members,

My name is Kristi Gruber, and I am the Student and Instructional Support Specialist at Glacial Hills Elementary School in Starbuck.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

At Glacial Hills Elementary, we serve preschool through 6th-grade students, with over 58% of our student body falling within the free and reduced lunch subgroup, and approximately 24% receiving special education services. Our students come from a diverse set of backgrounds, and we are committed to meeting their unique needs.

We take great pride in our student-centered and environmental approach to education. With a focus on community-based and project-based learning, we create a learning environment that allows each child to thrive. Over 65% of our staff have experience teaching in residential traditional schools and now call GHES their home. We don't expect teachers or students to "fit in a box," but instead, we empower them to learn and grow in ways that suit their individual needs.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a significant loss in the support and resources we can offer. These cuts would affect our ability to provide tailored interventions, specialized services, and the necessary accommodations that our students depend on. Our teachers may be forced to reduce individualized instruction, and students requiring additional support could face delays or interruptions in receiving the services they need to succeed.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever. Without this funding, we risk undermining the educational opportunities that have allowed our students to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your continued support of our charter school community.

My name is Rachel Swart and I am a paraprofessional at Harbor City International school.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Our students range from ages 14 to 19, grades 9-12. Also, we are now enrolling grades 7 and 8 beginning for the 2025/2026 school year to become a 7-12 grade program.

- 40% of our students have a diagnosed disability
- 30% receive special education services
- Our beautiful, historic (over 100 years old!) building requires consistent maintenance to support our programming.

Harbor City International School is a school where students can challenge themselves academically as well as include themselves in a strong, inclusive community where they learn to submerge themselves safely into activities and community involvement. This community is so much more than education. It's a place that fosters creativity. It's filled with smiles and laughter, and when not, conflict resolution. It shines a light on outside-of-the-box thinking and innovation.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean nearly half of our students would be directly impacted. It would put more work and tasks on staff who already do so much for the well being and education of our students. As the phrase goes, 'something's gotta give' when we exceed the capacity of what one is able to give. Unfortunately it will be the students who suffer the most, and given our students are the future,

in turn our future will be negatively impacted as well. Risk taking is an important part of development, and here at this school, I see students engaging in taking these risks. These are the people who change the future for the better now, and later in life. They work to make the world a better place because they genuinely care AND have the means to do so because their school showed them what is important to learn and grow; feeling safe, feeling heard, feeling seen, and showing your peers the same.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Rachel Swart (she|her)

*My name is April Rodriquez and I am an Administrative Assistant at E.C.H.O. Charter School*

*While I understand the state's budget challenges, cutting critical funding for the 70,000 public school students and families who attend chartered public schools is unacceptable. Chartered public school students already receive significantly less funding than those in traditional districts, and these cuts would be devastating — and could force some schools to shut down entirely. This is the moment to invest more in our students, not less. We can't balance the state budget on the backs of **chartered public school students** and **students with disabilities**. These are public school students and they deserve to be treated fairly with the same level of funding and support as any other student in our state.*

*At a time when the federal government is already backing away from its responsibility to support students with disabilities, Minnesota's Governor should be stepping up—not stepping back.*

--

**April Rodriquez**

**Administrative Assistant**

**Echo Charter School**

I am writing with concerns about proposed cuts in the new education budget that specifically target charter schools. These include proposed cuts to long term facility maintenance revenue (LTFMR) and special education tuition billing.

Charter schools are already underfunded, generally receiving less than 80% of the funding that traditional schools receive. For instance, for the 2023 school year, our three local districts (districts 191, 196, and 194) spent \$18,911 on average per student whereas FIT Academy only spent \$14,850 (78%).

Cuts to these two funding sources would further widen the funding gap between traditional districts and charter schools. **Families who choose public charter schools expect equal access to educational opportunities and charter schools are held to all of the same state mandates as traditional school**

**districts.** Inequity in funding does not align with any of the state's efforts to provide equity for all students.

Specifically, charter schools are already severely underfunded for facilities with \$1314 allocated per pupil for lease payments. **Did you know that this allocation has not been increased or adjusted for inflation since having been lowered by 20% as part of state budget cuts in 2003?** To cut LTFMR would take facility funding to its lowest levels in over 30 years which is grossly disproportionate in comparison to the levy funding that traditional districts have access to for addressing increasing facility costs.

Charter schools do benefit from tuition billing to serve its disproportionately higher special education population. For instance, at FIT Academy, our percentage of students with disabilities is 21% whereas the state average is 17%. **Keep in mind that the tuition billing that is proposed to be cut is part of the funding that still amounts to less than 80% of what traditional schools receive.** To cut tuition billing would further cause funding inequity, particularly in how we are serving a higher percentage population with disabilities.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this information because we know that facts matter. Please direct all questions to Claud Allaire, Superintendent at FIT Academy at [callaire@fitacademymn.org](mailto:callaire@fitacademymn.org).

Sent on behalf of Claud Allaire, Superintendent at FIT Academy Charter School.

Best regards,  
Betsy Hall



# Bluffview Montessori

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shelly Merchlewitz and I am an intervention teacher at Bluffview Montessori.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

At Bluffview Montessori, I work with students in grades 1- 8 that struggle with math or reading in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 level of the MnMTSS framework. My goal is to give students the help they need to catch up to their peers and to keep them out of special education. Our school has just over 200 students in Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Special education services are provided to more than 10% of our students. Many of them come to us from the home district seeking the services we are currently able to provide our special education students that the district can or does not.

Bluffview Montessori was the first charter school and it has been around for over 30 years. It provides student with a different environment and a new way to learn than a traditional school. What we do at Bluffview is working. Our students are succeeding. Our state testing scores are the highest in the area. We are higher than the home district and overall state scores. Making cuts to our programming would make that harder to do.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean fewer paraprofessionals to provide the support our special education students need to be successful in the classroom. It could mean fewer teachers to provide services to our students which would increase the caseload of the remaining teachers and they would not be able to provide the individualized services our students need to meet their IEP goals.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Shelly Merchlewitz  
ADSIS/Title Coordinator and Interventionist  
Bluffview Montessori



700 Glendale Street | St. Paul, MN 55114  
651.649.5495 | avalonschool.org

March 25th, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Carrie Bakken, and I serve as the Executive Director at Avalon Charter School. I have been at Avalon School since 2001 when we opened our doors. I stayed because of our incredible community and student centered model.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Avalon School has a long history of serving a significant number of students with disabilities (over 50%) in grades 6-12. Our student centered approach is both locally and nationally recognized as a model that serves all learners through a personalized approach and universal design. Many of our students were not successful in the traditional district model, and we serve a critical public school need in the Twin Cities.

I have appreciated Minnesota's commitment to funding charters as an essential piece of the public education fabric in Minnesota. Please continue to honor this commitment and do not target charter school funding.

At Avalon, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean significant cuts to our programming, staff, professional development, facilities improvements, and the many community engagement opportunities that enrich our students' experience.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Carrie Bakken,  
Executive Director

**Dear Chairs Youakim and Kresha and members of the Education Finance Committee,**

The **Coalition for Children with Disabilities** is asking committee members to consider our serious concern regarding provisions in HF 2433 that propose changes to special education transportation reimbursement. **These changes risk deepening existing disparities and could result in violations of students' rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

Prior to any changes to the reimbursement formula, the state must address the long-standing transportation challenges school districts face due to chronic underfunding of services for students with disabilities. We are particularly concerned that these proposed changes will unintentionally incentivize Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to limit or deny transportation services based on budget constraints rather than a child's educational need. This would result in a denial of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and disproportionately harm our most vulnerable students.

Districts across the state already struggle to meet transportation needs. Due to the lack of available buses, trained drivers, and support staff, many schools are turning to contracted service providers to fulfill their obligations. These contracts are not chosen for convenience—they are often a last resort when districts lack the in-house capacity to meet IEP requirements.

Families all across Minnesota have been denied transportation services not because their children didn't qualify, but because no driver or vehicle was available. Some districts have acknowledged to use their inability to provide services directly and instead arranged for contracted transportation in order to comply with IDEA. Reducing reimbursement support without offering scalable solutions will only increase these instances—and will push districts into even more precarious positions.

The children we advocate for often require specialized services: Door-to-door transportation, quieter, less stimulating bus environments, modified seating and safety restraints, wheelchair lifts and accessibility equipment, and trained staff to ensure their safety in transit. **These needs are not optional. They are essential for equitable access to education. Cuts to funding or changes in reimbursement policy must not undermine that access.**

**We strongly urge the Legislature to:**

1. Suspend proposed reimbursement changes until a statewide assessment of transportation barriers and capacity is completed.
2. Invest in infrastructure, workforce development, and technical assistance to ensure districts can meet their legal and moral obligations to students with disabilities.
3. Include language in HF 2433 that protects students' access to special education transportation, and prevents budget-based denials of service.

We remain committed to working alongside state leaders to find solutions that support districts, respect families, and—most importantly—center the rights and needs of students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

**The Coalition for Children with Disabilities**

**COALITION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Autism Society of Minnesota • The Arc Minnesota • Decoding Dyslexia Minnesota • Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota • Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center • Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance • Minnesota Council on Disability Multicultural Autism Action Network • PACER Center  
Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of Minnesota • Proof Alliance





Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Dr. Lynn Peterson and I am the Executive Director at Cologne Academy (CA), a public charter school. Charter schools are schools of choice- chosen by parents; not because the school is the neighborhood school, rather because it excels at educating ALL. Parents make the decision to send their children to our PreK-8th grade school because we place academic and character education at the forefront. This is a school model that is working. CA is the [2nd top district in the state](#).

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor’s proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Cologne Academy is quite diverse when compared to western Carver county. Here is last year's demographics and enrollment.

<b>FY24 Enrollment Demographics</b>	Total Enrollment	Students of Color (SoC)	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRP)	English Learner (EL)	Special Education (SpEd)
Cologne Academy K-8	688	30.4%	18.5%	4.1%	12.2%
Central Prek-12	943	16.1%	24.8%	3.4%	18.9%
Statewide	869,967	38.6%	42.4%	9.7%	18.5%

Cologne Academy’s success is its data-driven focus. We meet each learner where they are at. This is the hardest work we do as the needs of today’s children are unique and ever changing. Today, there are more dynamics impacting a student’s learning trajectory than there were even ten years ago. Teaching, the art and science of, needs to be fluid, too.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean scholars would all get less than they deserve. Seems like the Governor is penalizing students that attend charter schools. Why? Minnesota should be the last state segregating students and parental choice.

Funding reductions will create a ripple effect that weakens an already weak education system, making it harder for students to succeed.

The Governor prides himself on ONE Minnesota. His proposal does not support this belief. Budget cuts will result in layoffs, which will increase stress and workloads for remaining teachers who will also contemplate staying in the field. Lower salaries and reduced benefits will make it harder to attract and



retain high-quality educators and dissuade new graduates from pursuing education. This will widen the achievement gap.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

**Lynn Peterson, Ed.D.**

Executive Director

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Matt McFarlane and I am the Executive Director at PiM Arts High School in Eden Prairie. As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding. At PiM, 50% of our students are supported by IEP or 504 plans. As a High School, we often inherit these plans from their previous schools. Our case managers each have around 20 students on their caseload. Our team works to provide support to our students in the most efficient and effective ways we are able. Students are drawn to PiM for our high quality arts programming, but many parents find our smaller school population of around 350 students to be a big draw compared to the huge districts around us, especially for students who deal with depression, anxiety, or students on the Autism Spectrum. We regularly hear from parents how our school setting "saved their student" because they finally felt safe, or seen.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean staffing reductions and a reduction of services. With our current budget, we would be looking at \$80,000-100,000 - this may not seem like much in the context of the big box districts around us, but for us this is a major impact to our ability to offer what the students who arrive at our door require. This would directly impact the experience and growth of our students. One of the talking points I have heard around Charter School Special Education is that we run "Cadillac" Programs- to use this comparison, I would say we run a base model "Toyota Camry" program - very dependable, will not break down often, and gets our students where they need to go. We continue to work creatively in the limited budget environment we have always experienced.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,



Matt McFarlane

Executive Director  
PiM Arts High School



# Bluffview Montessori

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Randi Smith and I am a teacher at Bluffview Montessori School. As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students.

Bluffview Montessori School is a public charter school, without any private funding. Our school is a community that empowers learners to unfold their full potential as whole and unique persons in a global community.

These cuts include reductions to special education funding. This would affect our population of special education students, ranging from kindergarten through eighth grade level students. In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean 10% of our school's unreimbursed special education costs would be cancelled.

The proposed budget cuts would also affect long-term facility maintenance funding at Bluffview Montessori School. Our school currently receives \$132 per pupil, to be used for any purpose related to the general operations of the school. This funding would be permanently removed for our school, which means there would be no support in maintaining the long-term needs of our school building.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Ms. Randi Smith  
Building Substitute (Teacher)  
Bluffview Montessori School



**FACE TO FACE ACADEMY**  
1165 Arcade Street • St. Paul, MN 55106  
Phone: (651) 772-5544 • Fax: (651) 772-5621  
Web Site: [www.f2facademy.org](http://www.f2facademy.org)

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Darius Husain and I have the privilege of serving as Executive Director of Face to Face Academy, a Public Charter School in the East Side neighborhood of St. Paul.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Face to Face Academy's mission is to serve the most At-Risk students for dropping out of High School. For our students, the Academy is the last, best chance to earn a diploma and reengage in their lives. Academy students often come from larger school districts where they have experienced failure and lack of credit progress. The school has been noted by multiple stakeholders for closing the achievement gap, including being named a High-Quality School by the Department of Education on multiple occasions.

A big reason for the turnaround and success students experience when they attend Face to Face is because of the small class sizes and strong relationships with staff. The proposed cuts in funding would lead to a likely increase in class sizes and a reduction in staff, potentially undoing the considerable gains students experience at the Academy. Based on the State's commitment to prioritize underserved populations, it is counterproductive and against mission to balance a budget at the expense of the most marginalized students.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Darius Husain  
Executive Director  
Face to Face Academy



# Bluffview Montessori

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Angela Kaul and I am an elementary teacher at Bluffview Montessori School.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. **These cuts include reductions to special education funding that would affect 3 of my highest need students.** As a Montessori school, our environment is unique to most traditional public schools, including multi-age classrooms. I teach 25 students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, giving me three years with each child to develop the relationship needed to truly help them grow and learn. Public charter schools already receive less funding per student than non-charter schools, and yet there are no non-charter, public Montessori schools in Winona for families and students who need this approach to learning. We cannot sustain our programming and staffing with cuts like the ones proposed in this budget.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. **Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Angela Kaul

E2 Teacher

TO : [jody.withers@house.mn.gov](mailto:jody.withers@house.mn.gov) and [polly.cerkvenik@house.mn.gov](mailto:polly.cerkvenik@house.mn.gov)

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Pamela LaManna and I am a grade 5 teacher at Higher Ground Academy Elementary School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Higher Ground Academy's student population is of African descent. We have students from 20+ African countries. This is our 25<sup>th</sup> year educating students. We provide an excellent education for our students, meeting their academic needs from where they are and help them grow to meet their learning levels and exceed expectations. We as educators have a community connection to our families. We are an environmental education school.

#### **Mission**

The mission of Higher Ground Academy is to prepare students to become successful, ethical, and responsible citizens who are ready for all the challenges of the twenty-first century. To that end, students graduating from the Academy will be college ready, stewards of the environment, and ethical citizens who value hard work, honesty, integrity, equity, and diversity.

#### **Vision**

The tenets of HGA are that all children can learn; that children learn all of the time; that experience teaches immediately; and that expectations are built on experience. Therefore, the vision is to encourage students' maximum intellectual and leadership development to meet 21st century standards of education through concerted preparation to pursue post-secondary and post baccalaureate studies. It is intended that HGA students will be adequately prepared to assume leadership roles in their communities and fields of endeavor.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean special education students would not receive equitable education needs that the public-school districts receive. Charter schools are public schools and should be funded equally. The child is the person that needs the special education services wherever they attend school. If the state provides services for special needs children, the state should fund the services for that child and not exclude any child.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Pamela LaManna  
Grade 5 Teacher  
Environmental Coordinator  
Higher Ground Academy





# LAKES INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE ACADEMY

An IB World School

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shannon Peterson; I'm the Executive Director of Lakes International Language Academy (LILA).

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Our school serves 1400 students, PreK – 12. We offer language immersion to the elementary students and are an IB World School, offering International Baccalaureate programming to all students in all grades. We're proud to have been the first to offer this type of program in our area, and have sparked the flame to offer either immersion or IB in Forest Lake Area Schools, and several other neighboring districts.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean having to cut the general education budget. Even with our current Special Ed funding, our school still experiences an \$50K gap per classroom when compared with the district school down the street. If our funding is cut further, we would need to cut staff from the general education budget and/or reduce salaries, already significantly lower than those in district schools. I understand the issues with Special Ed funding, and will continue to push for full funding from the federal government for all Minnesota public schools. But in the meantime, please do not remove the single financial advantage that charters have over districts, thereby widening the funding gap even more.

**LOWER SCHOOL** • Main Campus  
246 11th Ave. S.E., Forest Lake, MN 55025  
651-464-0771

**UPPER SCHOOL** • Headwaters Campus  
19850 Fenway Ave. N., Forest Lake, MN 55025  
651-464-8989

**KINDER PREP** • LILA Annex  
121 11th Ave. S.E., Forest Lake, MN 55025  
651-464-0771



**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,



Shannon Peterson  
Executive Director  
[speterson@mylila.org](mailto:speterson@mylila.org)  
651-252-6704





March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Diane Pangal and I am the Executive Director of Spero Academy. Spero Academy is a special education elementary Charter School with campuses in both Northeast Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park.

First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the work you and your colleagues do on the Education Finance Committee. Managing the state's education budget is no small task, and I appreciate your dedication to making informed financial decisions that impact our Minnesota communities.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

I am writing to share my deep concerns regarding proposed budget cuts to special education funding in Minnesota Charter Schools. These proposed reductions would place an increased burden on Minnesota Charter school students, educators, and families who rely on these educational supports assisting students with disabilities to access their education. Special education funding ensures that **every child**—regardless of ability—has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. Without adequate funding, Minnesota Charter schools struggle to provide individualized support, essential resources, and trained staff to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, the proposal to reduce special education funding only in Minnesota Charter Schools is an inequitable approach to reduce the state education finance budget. It tells Minnesota residents that a student with a disability attending a Charter School does not deserve equitable funding.

Spero Academy (FKA Fraser Academy) began its special education mission in 2004. I have been a part of this journey since we opened our doors in 2004. Initially, we had limited funding and understood first hand what it is like to support our students who have barriers accessing their education due to their disability or in some cases multiple disabilities. As we grew and funding increased, we were able to support our students with adequate staffing, licensed therapists, and supplemental curriculum developed to meet our students at their level. We provide support in social thinking, behavior

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Spero Academy - Minneapolis  
2701 California Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418  
612-465-8600



Spero Academy - Brooklyn Park  
7444 Humboldt Ave N Brooklyn Park, MN 55444  
612-465-8611



management, assistive technology, and personalized assessments to support the whole child. Because of special education funding, our Minnesota Charter families have hope for a future.

Spero Academy is a Special Education Charter school not impacted by this proposed budget cut but we are a part of the Minnesota Charter school community. We stand by our partners and encourage you to support all students with disabilities equally.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and learn more about how we can work together to support students with special needs. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide any additional insight.

Sincerely,

Diane Pangal  
Executive Director  
Spero Academy



---

Spero Academy - Minneapolis  
2701 California Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418  
612-465-8600



Spero Academy - Brooklyn Park  
7444 Humboldt Ave N Brooklyn Park, MN 55444  
612-465-8611

March 26, 2025

Via E-Mail Delivery

Representative Cheryl Youakim, Co-Chair  
Representative Ron Kresha, Co-Chair  
House Education Finance Committee  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Co-Chairs Youakim and Kresha, and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

I am writing you today as Executive Director of STARBASE Minnesota, Inc. to express my gratitude for the past financial support we have received from the State of Minnesota and to ask for your support for the appropriation included in HF2433 for STARBASE. The Governor is recommending \$500,000 per year in FY26-27 for an appropriation to STARBASE Minnesota in his budget recommendations. This recommendation has been included in HF2433.

STARBASE uses this funding, along with support from Minnesota corporations (3M, Ecolab, Xcel Energy, etc) to prepare Minnesota’s skilled STEM workforce for the future by providing schools with free STEM education programming and resources. STARBASE has state of the art facilities in St. Paul and Duluth where students participate in 5-day, 20-25 hour, immersive, authentic and rigorous STEM programs.

STARBASE also reaches students and their teachers across Minnesota by providing them with free STEM kits and curriculum. All STARBASE curriculum is aligned with Minnesota math and science benchmarks and is reflective of premiere STEM education, building students’ skills and confidence in STEM and exposing students to STEM career opportunities, focusing on populations of students traditionally underrepresented in STEM. Additionally, STARBASE helps students continue their path in STEM by bringing STEM mentors into afterschool programming, connecting students with real-world scientists and engineers. These programs and more are made possible through our state funding.

The impact of STARBASE programming on students and educators is evident in the vast reach of our programming and the results we see from students and teachers.

<b>Program Reach (2023-2024)</b>	<b>Program Results (2023-2024)</b>
<b>Onsite Programming</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 101 schools</li><li>• 6,906 5th grade students</li><li>• 245 educators</li></ul>	<b>Onsite Programming – Student pre/post, surveys, teacher surveys</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 94% of students improve pre to post test</li><li>• 97% reported they learned new things</li><li>• 82% have greater interest in STEM and STEM careers</li><li>• 92% of teachers report gains in knowledge, strategies</li><li>• 100% of teachers want to return</li></ul>
<b>STEM Kits and Curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 34,155 students</li><li>• 845 educators</li><li>• 438 schools</li><li>• 51% metro - 49% greater MN</li><li>• 63% Title 1 - 37% non-Title 1</li></ul>	<b>STEM Kits and Curriculum – Teacher Surveys</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 94% observed increased student engagement in STEM</li><li>• 83% reported positive impact on student problem solving and critical thinking</li><li>• 79% noted greater student interest in STEM careers</li><li>• 91% of teachers reported greater ability/ease teaching STEM</li><li>• 95% of teachers reported the STEM kits helped them implement math and/or science benchmarks</li></ul>

At STARBASE, we are doing our part to help build a strong future Minnesota STEM workforce and STEM literate society. We look forward to continuing this important work.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions. My email address is [mpeters@starbasemn.org](mailto:mpeters@starbasemn.org). Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,

*Melanie Peters*

Melanie Peters  
Executive Director, STARBASE Minnesota

cc – Belinda Cordina, Chair - STARBASE Minnesota Board of Directors/Director of Global Operations- Life Sciences, Ecolab

INSERT YOUR SCHOOLS LOGO

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Valerie Lande and I am a Special Ed Paraprofessional at Marine Village School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean our students would not receive the help that they deserve. The young boy I am lucky to be with all day would get lost in the system and wouldn't continue thriving the way he is.

We are a small school with only 95 students...everyone knows everyone and everyone cares for every student we have. Our sped students are all thriving and really enjoying school thanks to such caring staff.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Valerie Lande  
Special Ed Para  
Marine Village School  
*"Small is mighty!"*



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Nikki Schwartz and I am the K-12 Special Education Teacher at ECHO Charter School in Echo, MN 56237.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

*I am the K-12 Special Education Teacher at ECHO Charter School and doing this proposed budget would really hurt our special education students here at ECS. We have students in Elementary School, Junior High, and High School so yes there is a wide range with ages. Doing this proposal will take from these students and will lower their success in a proper and deserved education.*

*The programming here at ECS is revolved around each special education student, fit for their own specific needs and abilities. These types of modifications and accommodations are very vital for our special education students here at ECS because we are very unique in the way we teach our students because we care, we love to educate, and most of all we love to see our students succeed to their fullest here at ECS.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean educational blockage. Here are some examples below:

- *Support staff*
- *Resources for educational academics such as manipulatives, tools (dynovox, chromebooks etc.).*
- *Anything pertaining to support, accommodations, and modifications to help in their education.*





**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

ECHO Charter School  
EVERY CHILD HAS OPPORTUNITIES  
Nikki Schwartz K-12 Special Education Teacher



March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

The **Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS)** is a membership organization of chartered public schools from across the state. MACS advocates for students in charter schools, supports charter school innovation, quality and accountability, and facilitates cooperation in Minnesota's charter school community to promote equitable opportunities and excellence in education for students.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, MACS respectfully requests that you reject the deeply problematic proposed cuts to chartered public school students.**

Governor Walz's budget updates unveiled last week included significant cuts to chartered public schools, over \$41 million per biennium. **These proposed cuts include a significant divestment from the state in chartered public school students and chartered public school students with disabilities.** This is an unacceptable way to address future budget deficits, as this will impact 70,000 students and their families.

Chartered public schools already receive less than their traditional district counterparts. Charters cannot receive any funds from the various levies (including \$724 per pupil in Local Optional Revenue). As a result, chartered public schools across the state are already operating with extremely tight budgets and **these specific and significant cuts (outlined below) could shutter some schools, causing instability for the families and students who choose these public schools.** The specific cuts outlined in Governor Walz's updated budget include:

- State Divestment in Special Education Tuition Reimbursement for Charter Schools - \$21 million (26-27 biennium)
- Eliminating Charter School Long Term Facilities Maintenance Funding - \$20 million (26-27 biennium)

MACS can go into the details on how these would negatively impact the sector and different types of chartered public schools if requested. The topline is that the proposed cuts to these critical funding streams, which would abruptly occur, will impact teaching and learning, disrupt services for students with disabilities, and potentially result in a number of school closures.

**Again, we respectfully call on you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**



MN Association of  
Charter Schools

Sincerely,

Joey Cienian  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS)



“Empowering Today, Leaders Tomorrow”

District# 4171  
Office of Noble Academy

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

I am Neal Thao, the CEO of Noble Academy.

As you review HF2433, the Governor’s proposed budget, I want to highlight the serious concerns regarding the proposed cuts affecting chartered public school students. Specifically, the reduction in special education funding presents a significant challenge.

Situated in the heart of Brooklyn Park, Noble Academy proudly serves K-8 students across the metro area, standing as a beacon of education and opportunity in the Twin Cities. Our commitment extends beyond academic excellence—we prioritize the social and emotional well-being of our students, helping them regain stability after years of pandemic-induced disruptions.

Our school is distinguished by high academic standards and outstanding student achievement. We primarily serve immigrant families, many of whom are English learners or come from low-income backgrounds. Our curriculum embraces Hmong culture and literacy, enriching our students' educational experience. Currently, 85% of our students are Asian, 11% are Black, and 3% are Hispanic. Additionally, 7% of our students receive special education services.

Like many schools across the nation, Noble Academy has faced unprecedented challenges in the wake of the pandemic. The surge in referrals to social workers and psychologists has highlighted an urgent need for additional support. Our school’s well-being survey reflected national trends, underscoring the necessity of increased student support services.

Supporting students with special needs and social-emotional difficulties is a priority for our school, and funding reductions would significantly impede our students’ ability to thrive academically. These cuts would diminish vital resources, reducing support for students with disabilities and ultimately compromising the quality of education we provide.

As you craft the Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to preserve this critical state funding for charter school students. Now, more than ever, our students need your unwavering support.

Sincerely,

Neal Thao  
CEO  
Noble Academy

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs, Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Kelley Velleux. I am the parent of an Avalon School graduate and a current student at Minnesota Online High School, two highly individualized and valuable charter schools in Saint Paul.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to draw your attention to the deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students, including reductions to special education funding.**

- My daughter, Arabella Velleux, graduated from Avalon School in 2022. She graduated with a Bachelor' of Science in Math from Augsburg University in December 2024 and will work towards a PhD in Policy from the University of Minnesota this fall. **Arabella is currently 19 years old.** Without the Academy for Science and Agriculture (AFSA) and Avalon School, **this would have been impossible for her.** In October of her 5<sup>th</sup>-grade year, a fantastic teacher at our district school disclosed how advanced Arabella seemed and suggested a smaller, more personalized environment for her. That began our journey through the charter system. At age 12, Arabella was diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The smaller size, flexibility, and personalization the charter school system offered her led her to begin internships at 12, high school at 13, and college at 14. The impact of school-based mental health supports, the 504 system, and the tireless flexibility her small project-based high school offered cannot be overstated. She once attempted to return to a district-based high school and could not navigate the large buildings, large class sizes, and overwhelming student body. She returned to her charter school a week later, settled back in seamlessly, and continued her fantastic journey. She spent 2 years combining PSEO with extensive projects and internships in public policy. **Only a charter school could offer her this flexibility and support.**
- My son, Oliver Velleux, is a junior at Minnesota Online High School. Oliver was identified as Autistic in an ECFE evaluation and soon received a medical diagnosis of autism and ADHD. He was 3. He participated in ECFE preschool and benefited amazingly from the support. He did well in our district community school's inclusion Kindergarten and First Grade classes. In second grade, as demands increased, so did his behaviors. His classroom teacher told us that he was unable to read. At home, he read Jurassic Park aloud to us. **Our district school failed him.** His teachers, school, and SpEd support were terrific – they did not have the space or ability to provide for his needs. He left the district school in the middle of second grade. He attended **Minnesota Virtual Academy**

for the remainder of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This gave us the space and flexibility to commit to outside therapies and support in tandem with his public education support. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, he entered **Cyber Village Academy**, a small hybrid school in Saint Paul, 3 days on campus and 2 days online. This gave him a gradual reentry into school, more access to the sensory supports he needed, and a much smaller setting, which eased his sensory overload, allowing him to spend more time in the classroom. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he transferred to **Avalon School**. This project-based model allowed him to channel his fixations into guided projects, leading to fantastic growth in his Academic abilities. For high school, after COVID-19, he requested more structure and transferred to the **Academy for Science and Agriculture**. Here, he learned about his love for biology, got immense support in developing his confidence and writing skills, and learned how mean kids can be. Bullying led to physical symptoms of anxiety that made attendance challenging. So, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, he enrolled in **Minnesota Online High School**. His transition was seamless, and my C student began to enroll As in PSEO, lobbied for curriculum changes with his teachers, and found peace and balance he had never known. **Each of these schools played a distinct and important role in his journey. He would not be where he is now without each of these fantastic Minnesota Charter Schools.**

In my family, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean two entirely different paths for two exceptional Minnesota students. The smaller sizes and increased access to Special Education Services we found in the Minnesota Charter School system changed my children's lives.

- Minnesota Virtual Academy may not have sent physical supplies necessary to support Oliver's motor abilities at the time.
- Oliver may not have been able to pursue additional outside services
- Unique models – a hybrid, online, project or agriculture-based – would be less available to students who need alternative options
- Class sizes – general and special education – would grow, decreasing the effectiveness of this option for families like mine
- Innovative special education supports developed in the charter sphere would decrease
- Children like mine would suffer and they would not be receiving equal opportunity to that of their peers.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,



Kelley Velleux  
Parent of Two Charter Success Stories

Academy for Science and Agriculture (AFSA)  
Minnesota Virtual Academy  
Cyber Village Academy  
Avalon School  
Minnesota Online High School



March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Maureen Finlayson and I am a teacher and parent of a kindergartener at Eagle Ridge Academy charter school.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- We are a K-12 school with a large amount of students of color, EL students, students with IEPs, and students who qualify for financial assistance.
- Families choose our school because we are committed to excellence for all students. Not only do we outperform the local districts in testing, but our school is a welcoming, safe environment. I choose to work here, for already less pay than I got at a previous district, because I feel safe at work, and know that our students, including my daughter, receive a quality education.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean:

- Not being able to keep up with student needs even though we must take all students. (We have a lottery system; we do not weed out students based on their academic performance, etc. We do not turn students away for any reason other than a grade level being full.)
- Cuts in areas other than special education, as the money must come from somewhere. I foresee having to cut:
  - Necessary mental health services. It seems in districts that counseling staff is always the first to go.
  - *Staff salaries that are already lower than surrounding districts. While I care more about my students than making a lot of money, I am the breadwinner for my family and things are extremely tight on my salary as it is.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Maureen Finlayson  
Math Intervention Teacher  
Eagle Ridge Academy







March 25, 2025

Minnesota House of Representatives Education Finance Committee

Dear Chair Kresha and Chair Youakim,

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Independent Schools (MAIS), we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed elimination of nonpublic pupil aid and transportation aid in MN HF2433. This legislation directly contradicts long-standing Minnesota policy that ensures equitable access to educational benefits for all students, including those attending nonpublic schools.

Minnesota has a well-established history of supporting all students, regardless of their school choice. According to **Minnesota Statutes, Sections 123B.40 - 123B.48**, nonpublic pupil aid has provided essential educational resources such as textbooks, nursing, and counseling support services. The intent of these statutes has been to ensure that every pupil in Minnesota shares equitably in educational benefits, reinforcing the state's commitment to parental choice in education.

Eliminating nonpublic pupil aid and transportation assistance would place an undue burden on thousands of families who rely on these critical services. It would create an inequitable education system, limiting educational opportunities and undermining the fundamental right of parents to choose the best educational environment for their children.

These cuts would negatively impact nonpublic school students and families and also strain the public school sector. For example, MAIS member Groves Academy works closely with public schools to support students who struggle due to learning differences and needs. As part of its mission to transform lives, Groves Academy helps students transition back to the general education setting, typically within a student's public school district.

To facilitate these transitions, Groves Academy and the Groves Learning Organization provide neuro-psychological educational evaluations and, when necessary, speech and language evaluations. These evaluations require considerable time and financial investment, relieving public schools of the responsibility to conduct these assessments for students residing in their districts. Each evaluation process, which includes gathering teacher input, preparing paperwork, and attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, takes approximately 30 hours per student. Each year, Groves Academy partners with 36 districts and charter schools across the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota to ensure a smooth transition for students. Without nonpublic pupil aid, these services would be at risk, potentially increasing the financial and administrative burden on public school districts.

We urge you to oppose any efforts to remove these vital educational supports. Instead, we encourage the legislature to uphold Minnesota's long-standing commitment to equity in education by preserving nonpublic pupil aid and transportation aid.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate your dedication to serving all Minnesota students and ensuring that every child receives the educational resources they need to succeed.

Sincerely,

Ann Weiss, Executive Director, MAIS

Dr. Anne Stavney, MAIS Legal Liaison  
Head of School, The Blake School

Matt Cavellier, President, MAIS  
Head of School, Shattuck-St. Mary's



March 24, 2025

Representative Cheryl Youakim, Co- Chair  
Representative Ron Kresha, Co-Chair  
House Education Finance Committee  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Youakim and Kresha,

Thank you for your service to the state and your constituents. I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed elimination of aids to nonpublic students and nonpublic pupil transportation services included in Governor Walz's budget recommendations to the legislature.

I have the honor to serve as principal of Community of Saints Regional Catholic School, a nonpublic school located in West St. Paul, educating students in West St. Paul, the West Side of St. Paul, and surrounding communities for more than 100 years.

Of the 196 K-8 students we serve at Community of Saints, 75% qualify for free or reduced lunch; Approximately 85% are students of color and 47% of students are multilingual learners. Our students and their families rely heavily on these services.

For more than 50 years, these services have provided equitable support to students, regardless of their educational setting. They advance the principle that education is for the common good of all students and families in Minnesota.

I urge you to oppose the elimination of these essential services. These programs will disproportionately impact the students and families at Community of Saints.

Thank you for your time and consideration in ensuring fair and equitable treatment for students and families who choose a nonpublic education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bridget Kramer".

Bridget Kramer  
Principal

CC: Members of the House Education Finance Committee



March 24, 2025

Representative Cheryl Youakim, Co-Chair  
Representative Ron Kresha, Co-Chair  
House Education Finance Committee  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Youakim and Kresha,

As the founder of Hope Academy, and on behalf of our 400 families, I want to thank you for the wise and generous support the state has provided for decades to inner-city families who are doing the right thing--choosing to invest deeply in the future of the citizens of our state.

Located in the Phillips Neighborhood of south Minneapolis, Hope Academy is a K-12 school, serving 700 students, 78% of whom live in poverty. Most of our families live within the boundaries of the Minneapolis School District and are brought to and from school each day on 15 buses.

While I understand that most independent schools are in suburban areas, Hope Academy is one of the most beautifully diverse schools with some of the highest reading and math scores of black and brown children in our state. One of those scholars is a third grader named Kendall.

Kendall's mother, DeMarra, is a single parent who lives just south of Lake St. She's a working mom who is also taking classes. DeMarra doesn't own a car. She's trying to do right by her third-grade daughter by giving her the kind of remarkable education that she didn't receive herself. Kendall has been at Hope Academy since Kindergarten and is already reading up a storm. She is surrounded by caring teachers and friends and is benefiting enormously from a faith-based education.

DeMarra's only way to get Kendall to Hope Academy is on the school bus that our state currently provides. One night DeMarra told me that removing busing from Kendall would be devastating both to her and her daughter.

Kendall has benefited from an approach to teaching reading called "The Science of Reading," an evidence-based reading curriculum that Hope Academy has used long before it became law in the MN Read Act. For Minnesota students whose parents choose an independent school like Hope Academy, how does Kendall's family pay for the consumable textbooks to support Kendall's reading instruction? For the last 25 years, it has been provided by our Non-Public Pupil Textbook Aid to Students.

As you might imagine, our scholars at Hope Academy suffer from some the highest adverse childhood experiences of any in the state—traumatic experiences like hunger, the incarceration of a family member, or parental substance abuse. A few years ago, I testified before this committee that children don't leave these traumatic experiences at the door when they arrive at school each morning.



Attending to the mental health needs of our younger students is essential to their being able to attend to their teacher.

Hope Academy has an annual graduation rate of 95%. And half of those graduates are the first ones in their family to ever go to college. Those of us with teens know how hard it is to navigate the college admissions and scholarship process. One of our 2019 graduates, Kenneth Granados, came back to Hope Academy last month to encourage our students. He said that the full ride scholarship he received to a local college would have been impossible without the help of our College and Career Counseling office—counseling supported by Minnesota’s non-public pupil aid program.

Lastly, I want to remind you that Non-Public Pupil Aid also provides a licensed school nurse to our 700 students two days a week. She handles all the reporting to the state to keep our students current on their immunizations; she reviews the medical histories of our scholars and develops diabetes action plans; she oversees the hearing and eyesight screenings of all our scholars, and she keeps abreast of state law changes and informs us of public health threats so our scholars can be healthy and safe.

I suspect that it must have been an oversight to consider eliminating these vital benefits from some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Thank you for standing up for all the children and families in our state and opposing the proposed elimination of aid to nonpublic students and transportation services included in Governor Walz’s budget recommendation to the legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ Gregg".

Russ Gregg  
Founder and Head of School  
Hope Academy

A red-tinted illustration of a city skyline with various skyscrapers and buildings, located at the bottom of the page.

A remarkable, God-centered education for the youth of the city.



March 25, 2025

Via E-Mail Delivery

Representative Cheryl Youakim, Co- Chair  
Representative Ron Kresha, Co-Chair  
House Education Finance Committee  
Centennial Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Youakim and Kresha,

Thank you for your service and leadership to the House 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 HF2433.

Minnesota Statute 123B.40 states, "It is the intent of the legislature to provide for distribution of educational aids such as textbooks, standardized tests and pupil support services so that **every school pupil in the state will share equitably in education benefits and therefore further assure all Minnesota pupils and their parents freedom of choice in education.**"

In addition, Minnesota Statute 123B.84 states, "In districts where the state provides aids for **transportation it is in the public interest to provide equality of treatment in transporting school children of the state who are required to attend elementary and secondary schools pursuant to chapter 120A, so that the health, welfare and safety of the children, while using the public highways of the state, shall be protected.**"

These vital services, established five decades ago, advance the concept of providing equitable supports to all students is the right thing to do for students.

Minnesota is known for taking care of its citizens and students and eliminating these services runs in conflict with the common good. To refer back to Minnesota Statutes 123B.40 and 123B.84, how is it in the "public interest" to deny health and counseling services, safe transportation and educational aids to students and families, many with limited economic means, and who made a decision to select the education option that is in the best interest of their own children?



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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Benz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Tim Benz  
President

CC: Members of the House Education Finance Committee



March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Grace Yang and I am a Family Liaison at St. Paul City School. I have been advocating for parents and helping them access community resources and special education services for their children for over twenty years. Previously, I was a county child protection and juvenile delinquency social worker and I discovered that children with learning disabilities are more likely to be abused, truant, and over represented in our juvenile justice system.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding which will directly affect the families and students that I tirelessly work with.**

I also help with student enrollment at St. Paul City School and you should know that charter schools typically enroll and serve more special education students than traditional school districts (more in numbers as well as higher level of needs and services). Parents look to charter schools when their district schools have **failed** to meet their children's needs. Charter schools are smaller and don't have the constraints of big bureaucracy of traditional districts to meet the INDIVIDUALIZED needs of special education students.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean our students would not get the individualized services they desperately need to be successful at school. If students do not receive the support they need at school, they are more likely to be truant and not graduate. We all know the lifelong negative consequences of not graduating high school.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our parents and students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Grace Yang, MSW  
Family Liaison  
St. Paul City Charter School

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim and Committee Members:

My name is Kari Koerner, and I am a parent at Math and Science Academy (MSA), a charter school in Woodbury, MN. I am also on the MSA Board of Directors as a parent member.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

My husband and I have two children at MSA, both 12 years old and in seventh grade. We have always thought that MSA would be a great fit for our boys, and we were correct. MSA is a high-quality charter school for so many reasons.

- MSA provides rigorous instruction in all subject areas including music, art, technology, and Spanish.
- Students can participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities such as theater, robotics, athletics, speech, and debate.
- Students are accepted to MSA through a lottery process instead of being chosen based on test scores or socio-economic status.
- Students receive the special education supports they need and deserve.
- Class sizes are small, which allows for individualized and collaborative learning.
- The diversity of the student body and staff creates a rich community where every person belongs.
- All students are welcomed and valued.
- MSA is consistently ranked as the number one high school in the state.

Contrary to what has been promoted in recent media, charter schools are innovative, positive educational options for our students. Charter schools rely on state funding, and the state of Minnesota should continue to budget full funding for educating our children.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Kari Koerner  
Board of Directors, Parent Member  
Math and Science Academy





**North Lakes Academy**

K-12 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

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March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Cecelia Dodge and I am the Superintendent at North Lakes Academy Charter School, which was founded in 1999.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *Our K-12 charter school has 140 students who receive special education. That is about 30% of our student population.*
- *At NLA we say "Who you BECOME is as important as what you ACHIEVE." That is because we focus on helping students become better human beings through our Becoming curriculum, which is based on an approach called Top 20. We provide a small & safe community where we build curiosity and confidence. We are also authorized by Osprey Wilds, so we connect learning and the environment.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean significant reductions that would make it difficult to afford even the basics, and likely lead to Statutory Operating Debt (SOD).

- *With our already declining enrollment, and high facility costs, we are already not able to keep a safe amount of fund balance or days cash on hand. These cuts would force us to make reductions that make it difficult to operate, especially our high school, where the state requirements for teacher licenses and course offerings already challenge a small charter high school to be viable.*

---

**YOU BELONG HERE!**

308 15<sup>th</sup> Street Southwest, Forest Lake, Minnesota 55025 • Phone: 651.982.2688 • Fax: 651.464.6409

- *Our buildings need regular maintenance, just like those that belong to traditional school districts. Letting them deteriorate will create safety concerns and will eventually cost more money.*
- *We have not been able to fill some of our special education teaching positions. A cut in special education funding would reduce resources to fund creative solutions - and we would no longer be able to meet the needs of students with disabilities.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Cecelia Dodge , Superintendent/Executive Director



NLA K-6, 4576 232nd Street North, Forest Lake, MN 55025

NLA 7-12, 308 SW 15th Street, Forest Lake, MN 55025

email: [cdodge@northlakesacademy.org](mailto:cdodge@northlakesacademy.org)

office phone: (651) 982-2773

<https://www.northlakesacademy.org>





March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shawn Fondow and I am the Superintendent of Minnesota Transitions Charter School.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

Minnesota Transitions Charter School (MTCS) currently serves more than 6,600 kindergarten through twelfth grade students across the state of Minnesota through seat based and virtual programming. Our students come from every corner of the state and come from every demographic measured by MDE. MTCS has always sought to serve underserved communities. During the 2023-2024 school year, 66.7% of our students qualified for free or reduced priced lunch and 21.6% of our students were identified as qualifying for special education.

The eight MTCS programs meet students needs in a variety of ways. Our four "traditional" seat-based programs in Minneapolis serve students with small class sizes, attentive teachers, and provide individualized support and social services. P.E.A.S.E. Academy in Dinkytown is the oldest recovery school in the nation. The work done at P.E.A.S.E. is literally lifesaving. Our two online schools, while serving students that desire a flexible school day for many different reasons, serve a large population of students who have reported bullying as the primary reason for leaving traditional seat-based programming.

For many of our students, we are the second, third, or fourth school they have attended. In other words, as is the case with our charter colleagues, traditional public schools did not serve the needs of our students. If we did not exist, many of our students would disengage from school altogether.



At MTCS, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would require reductions in programming but it would primarily require a reduction in staffing. MTCS and our students feel particularly targeted by the proposed cuts in the Governor's budget proposal. Proposed changes to the compensatory funding calculation reduce funding to MTCS by \$405,290.26. The proposed cuts to Long Term Facilities Maintenance would be a further reduction of \$750,156 (based on 10/1/24 student enrollment). As a school that serves 1,229 (SY24) students with disabilities, changes to special education funding for charter schools add to the devastating effect of these proposals. It will be impossible to manage the compounding effects of the cuts of the Governor's proposals without reductions to staff.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Shawn Fondow  
Superintendent  
Minnesota Transitions Charter School



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shawn Fondow and I am the Superintendent of Minnesota Transitions Charter School.

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**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Shawn Fondow  
Superintendent  
Minnesota Transitions Charter School



## ST. PAUL CITY SCHOOL

215 University Ave W  
St. Paul MN 55103  
(p) 651-225-9177

[www.stpaulcityschool.org](http://www.stpaulcityschool.org)

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Leslie Allred and I am a School Social Worker at St. Paul City School. I am also a parent of multiple students who attend Great River School, another public charter school in St. Paul. I have been an active member of the charter school community for over a decade and seen the many ways that students in public charter schools, especially those with disabilities and unique needs, are provided with a compassionate and quality education.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *Of the approximately 617 students currently enrolled in my school, 129 students (21%) are currently receiving special education services.*
- *Of these students, the majority also have secondary needs that impact their access to education including being a multilingual learner (51% of our student population) or coming from an economically disadvantaged background (90% of families).*
- *St. Paul City School is a charter community that began 28 years ago as New Hope School, and has served the Frogtown community into a second generation of scholars who are proud to say their parents attended their school.*
- *Diversity, equity, and inclusion of all learners and their families into our programming is the basis of all we do. We were proud to become the first charter school to become a Full Service Community School and continue this work in building student success throughout their home, school, and community lives.*
- *Inclusion of students with disabilities is a vital component of this work. Without adequate funding to continue serving students who have sought out smaller charter communities like ours when a large school setting is not meeting their needs, Minnesota will be setting aside the rights of children with disabilities and their families.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean at a minimum a significant reduction in staff who are already struggling to fit all student needs into a busy





## ST. PAUL CITY SCHOOL

215 University Ave W  
St. Paul MN 55103  
(p) 651-225-9177

[www.stpaulcityschool.org](http://www.stpaulcityschool.org)

service schedule, or a more severe outcome of our school community of 28 years no longer being able to remain in service to the families who are now sending a second generation of scholars to learn with us.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Leslie Allred, MSW, LICSW, LSSW  
Associate Director  
St. Paul City School  
215 University Avenue W.  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
(651) 225-9177 x2180  
[lallred@spcsmn.org](mailto:lallred@spcsmn.org)



5926 Ryan Road ~ Duluth, MN 55804 ~ 218-525-0663

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shelly Pierson Evans and I am the Executive Director at North Shore Community School (NSCS).

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

As an PreK-6th grade school nestled between Duluth and Two Harbors in Northern Minnesota, we serve students during their formative elementary years. Our teachers do more than strive to meet the needs of all students, they are exceeding meeting those needs. Families with students receiving services in Special Education choose NSCS because our staff do such an amazing job supporting their child and helping them succeed.

NSCS has been serving families in our area since 1961. Generations have attended our school in the northwoods, both when it was a traditional district school, and now as a chartered public school going on 23 years. We continue to meet the needs of our families, even with less funding than traditional districts. We maintain at a minimum a 20% fund balance, budget conservatively, and offer engaging opportunities for our students.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean close to \$100,000 in reduced revenue from these two reductions alone.

These reductions are the equivalent of 1.5 teachers salaries, four paraprofessionals, increased class size, fewer dollars for classroom supplies, less support from the district to cover rising insurance costs, and more. Education has a number of challenges facing us, including staffing and teacher shortages. When faced with these challenges, we want great educators to stay in education and for people dedicated to the

education of children to choose to work in our schools. This funding is critical to the future of our state and our local communities.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for chartered public school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

*Shelly Pierson Evans*

Shelly Pierson Evans  
Executive Director

5926 Ryan Rd  
Duluth, MN 55804  
218-525-0663 ext. 118  
E-mail: [spierson@nscsk6.org](mailto:spierson@nscsk6.org)



# Achieve Language Academy

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Scott Woodington and I am the Executive Director at Achieve Language Academy.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- *The mission of our school is to provide a program of academic excellence with a focus on Hmong and Spanish language. Our school is a small charter school providing education for approximately 450 students pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. We have a poverty level of approximately eighty-five percent free and reduced students. We have approximately twelve percent special needs students and forty-three percent English language learners.*

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean laying off six or seven staff, which is about ten percent of our staff.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Scott Woodington  
Executive Director  
Achieve Language Academy



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Joanna Wallenberg and I am a founding board member, the current School Social Worker, and a parent of three scholars at Heartland Lakes Community School in Park Rapids, MN.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

At Heartland Lakes Community School (HLCS) we serve roughly 80 scholars in grades Kindergarten - 6th Grade, with almost 30% of those scholars qualifying for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This is a significantly higher percentage than our neighboring traditional public schools.

But this is no surprise because HLCS was created so that kids and families in our small community would have access to a less traditional public school option. Our program centers Outdoor Education, hands-on and Expeditionary Learning, and a focus on the whole child. It is no surprise to us that this model attracts kids who learn differently.

At HLCS, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our scholars would mean devastating budget cuts that would greatly impair our ability to provide high-quality, innovative programming for our special education scholars - as well as every other scholar we serve.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

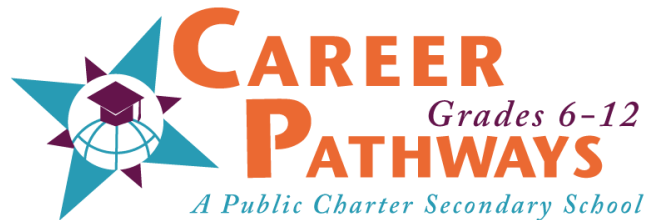
Joanna Wallenberg, MSW, LICSW  
School Social Worker  
Heartland Lakes Community School

**Heartland Lakes Community School**

[www.heartlandlakescs.org](http://www.heartlandlakescs.org)

218-237-3903 | [info@heartlandlakescs.org](mailto:info@heartlandlakescs.org)

1005 Park Avenue N. | P.O. Box 760 | Park Rapids, MN



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

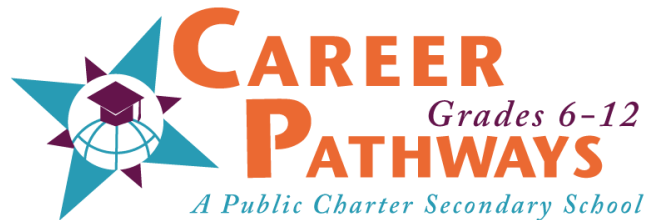
My name is Liz Lonetti and I am a charter school administrator at Career Pathways Secondary School. I am also the parent of children who went public schools in our state.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

My school serves an important point in our education system. We have a small and highly individualized program for students in grades 6-12. Many of our students have been to other schools and not found a place they can belong. At just over 110 students, we tend to attract families who need a school not so overwhelming for their children. Because of this reason, we have a high proportion of students with IEPs in our Special Education program.

We have one Special Education Coordinator and one Special Education teacher who currently serve over 35 students with IEPs. This is a high number of student considering their needs. The students' needs range from just a little extra support to students who spend most of the day within the Special Education program. Our goal for all students is help them reach adulthood with the skills and knowledge to be competent adults. We know if we can do that, not only have we raised up a person, we have helped our community gain someone who can contribute to the common good.

For students with IEPs, this task takes on special attention since they are most at risk for not graduating or meeting their potential. Once again, these are families and children who want to be at our school since they desire a smaller and more nurturing environment based on their child's needs. We do not turn down any student who otherwise can attend our school. We meet



them where there are at, often grade levels below where they should be, and support their academic and emotional growth.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean cutting paraprofessionals who work one on one with students with IEPs. These are often students who need more supervision to keep them in learning mode and to allow other students to be safe in our school. It means cutting back on the adaptive equipment that gives a student equitable access to their education. It means as our Special Education classroom furniture needs to be replaced that it will be with lower quality products less likely to hold up to daily use by older students. Ultimately it means our most vulnerable students, those with IEPs, will not be able to have full access to their education and are more likely to fall or stay behind.

I am also a mother who had children in private, district, charter and home school, of whom was in Special Education. My son is on the autism spectrum and it took time for him to find his groove in education. He started at Minneapolis Public Schools in their early intervention program at 3 years old. They worked nothing short of miracles. We made the decision to homeschool in 4<sup>th</sup> grade based on his changing needs. Finally in his 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, he attended a public charter school and graduated ready for his next steps. His experience in the public charter school would have been very different without the funding his school received to support his IEP goals. I am so grateful to the state for its commitment to funding Special Education the way it currently does. I know this is long and it's rare I write to law makers. Special Education is too near and dear to the people I love and care about to not respond to proposed cuts in its funding.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever. Please don't balance the budget off the backs of our most vulnerable students.**

Sincerely,

Liz Lonetti  
Executive Director  
Career Pathways



## ST. PAUL CITY SCHOOL

215 University Ave W  
St. Paul MN 55103  
(p) 651-225-9177

[www.stpaulcityschool.org](http://www.stpaulcityschool.org)

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Benjamin Magras, and I am the Executive Director of St. Paul City School, a thriving school of over 600 students just a block away from the Capitol on the corner of University and Marion.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I urge you to reconsider the deeply problematic cuts to charter public school students, including reductions to special education funding.

St. Paul City School serves a diverse urban student population, many of whom receive special education services. Our trauma-informed approach and emphasis on restorative practices create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. As a community school, we provide critical wraparound services to ensure our students and families have the resources they need to thrive. Our goals are nothing short of closing persistent gaps in outcomes across demographics.

Reductions in special education funding and overall operating revenue would significantly impact our ability to provide essential services. These cuts would force us to make difficult decisions, such as reducing specialized support staff, limiting individualized interventions, and increasing class sizes—directly affecting students who need the most support.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students. Now more than ever, our students need your support to ensure they receive the high-quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,  
Benjamin Magras  
Executive Director  
St. Paul City School





**DaVinci  
Academy**  
of Arts+Science

*From the Office of:* Antonio Kuklok  
Executive Director  
DaVinci Academy of Arts + Science  
532 Bunker Lake Blvd NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304  
[akuklok@davincicharterschool.org](mailto:akuklok@davincicharterschool.org) / (763) 754-6577 Ext. 1104

March 26, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Antonio Kuklok and I am The Executive Director at Davinci Academy of Arts & Science in Ham Lake.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding. DaVinci Academy has a long history of academic success out-pacing the local district and the state in MCA reading and math scores year over year. Furthermore, we serve a high population of students of color and a low income population of over 30%, they are also high achieving. We are one of the few schools who can say we do not have an achievement gap. Many families with students who have individualized education plans seek us out as we use our resources efficiently and sustainably to provide high impact and individualized instruction that is a beacon for public school choice in our area. We use state funds to ensure students have access to special education services, multi-tiered systems of support, and gifted and talented services to meet all students' needs.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean a reduction in staffing, services, and the specialized materials and instruction they rely on. Providing an equitable learning space where all students have access to individualized support has been a hallmark of DaVinci Academy, and our exceptional test scores prove our model is working. Disruptions in funding for Special Education students would widen the achievement gap and unfairly impact our students with special needs. At a time when the federal government is already backing away from its responsibility to support students with disabilities, I ask that you as a committee step up, not back in support of our charter school students, who are public school students.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonio Kuklok'.

Antonio Kuklok  
Executive Director  
DaVinci Academy of Arts & Science  
District 4185-07



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is David Croson and I am a parent, as well as a school board member, at [Eagle Ridge Academy](#) (MN-074122).

Eagle Ridge Academy enrolls a diverse set of students (including a substantial of first-generation Somali and Hmong families) and scholastically outperforms all but a few public schools statewide, whether public charter or neighborhood schools.

I certainly believe – and the data backs me up -- that we are well-managed, have low administrative overhead, and manage to deliver high-quality education despite receiving 30% less funding per student than our surrounding neighborhood schools.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor’s proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to funding for chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to specific funding for special education activities, which is essential both for students and teachers, and will not save money in the long run if students who need special education stop choosing charter schools.**

Balancing our budget while accepting all who wish to enroll requires these targeted sources of funds, which reimburse us for our actual expenditures. The proposed budget cuts to special education funding for charter schools, cuts in charter-school teacher compensation linked to educational outcomes (ATPPS and Q Comp, which have enjoyed bipartisan support since 2005), and other features of the bill would force us to run an operating deficit of over \$300,000 per year. I would be happy to provide more detail if desired; our finances are transparent.

As you know, Minnesota’s public charter schools joyfully educate (and are required to accept) all students whose families elect to enroll, and to provide special education services to all students who need them, regardless of their educational needs. We need to pay the same salaries to special education educators as any other school district -- but this bill would see our funding for special education reduced for no reason other than being a public charter.

If special-education funds are substantially reduced to charter schools, some combination of two things must happen: these services must be dramatically reduced in scope, meaning that charter schools will become dramatically less attractive for students who take advantage of special-education services, or the charter schools themselves will need to reduce their capacity (or, in the worst case, close) to balance their budgets. Similarly, if teacher-compensation funds

are reduced to charter schools, recruiting new teachers becomes even more difficult and the charter schools will need to increase class sizes or shrink, both of which endanger our educational mission.

This set of proposed budget cuts is an existential threat that hits the best-managed and highest-performing charter schools, such as Eagle Ridge Academy, the Woodbury Math & Science Academy, and Nova Classical Academy, especially hard. Somewhat ironically, charter schools with academic challenges, which parents would be willing to abandon if special-education services were not fully available, will not suffer as much.

As an economist, I should point out that cutting funds specifically to the 8% of students who have chosen public charter schools will also fail to save money for the State overall. If charter schools become unable to provide all of the special education services that our students need, and the students' families elect to abandon their public charter and attend public school in another format to receive access to these services, these students' needs do not simply vanish. These students deserve, and the students' families will expect, similar services from their traditional neighborhood schools, which spend at least 30% more to provide the same standard of services.

I recognize that budget restrictions require hard choices. As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to consider its effects on Minnesota students, teachers, and families. Please protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time or, at the very least, administer cuts to special education and teacher compensation across the board so that the burden is not borne disproportionately by the charter schools which educate approximately 70,000 Minnesota students (8% of K-12 enrollment.) If the budget crisis is truly so severe that special-education services and rewards for high-performing teachers need to be cut statewide, I am sure that we could handle 8% of the burden landing on charter schools – but not 100%.

Our students and teachers, as well as families who have chosen top-performing public charter schools for the educational excellence they offer, need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,



David C. Croson, Ph.D.  
Parent and Board Treasurer  
Eagle Ridge Academy



*We serve a diverse student body to succeed in a rigorous college preparatory program. Our mission is to ensure that all students graduate with the skills to achieve in college, to contribute positively to society, and to be accepting of all people.*

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair

Representative Youakim, Chair

House Education Finance Committee Members

75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd

St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Betsy Lueth, and I am the Executive Director of Twin Cities Academy charter school. We are a well-established 25 year old charter school on the eastside of St. Paul.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

We currently serve 550 students in grades 6th - 12th. 85% of our students are students of color, representing all racial and cultural demographics, and 70% of our students qualify for free and/or reduced priced lunch. 24% of our students currently receive special education services, and a large majority are considered high needs either academically or emotionally. And several of our especially high needs students were asked to leave or administratively transferred from their traditional school district. However, after coming to TCA, the students have found that the smaller setting was a place in which they were better able to thrive and learn.

We also serve 18% of our students with English Language Learning needs, including many recent immigrants, and we celebrate every year, a large percentage of our students

graduating with the skills and ability to move onto 2 and 4 year colleges on academic scholarships, sometimes very substantial. We feel our school's mission and commitment to meeting students where they are and providing them the support and enrichment they need, gives them opportunities which may not have been available to them otherwise.

In our school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean substantial layoffs throughout our school, increased class sizes (current 25-30 per class), increased special education teacher caseloads (currently most teachers have over 20 on their caseload already) and potentially our inability to remain in business after 25 years (it could shut us down).

TCA serves students with approximately 65% of the per pupil revenue that St. Paul Public Schools and other neighboring traditional schools receive. We are already functioning as lean and efficient as we are able. The additional cuts would be catastrophic to our already stretched budget.

The cuts the Governor is proposing will cut close to \$500,000 from our small budget, and are largely cuts to Special Education funding. These cuts targeting charter schools will make our funding even more inequitable and cause us to be unable to support students with Special Education well if at all.

Please don't add to the uncertainty we already feel about how public schools will be funded. We respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this turbulent time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

*Betsy Lueth*

Twin Cities Academy

690 Birmingham Street, St. Paul MN

[blueth@twincitiesacademy.org](mailto:blueth@twincitiesacademy.org)

651-205-4797 ext. 6562



**Aspen Academy, Public Charter School**

14825 Zinran Ave, Savage, MN 55378

Aspenacademymn.org

**Date: 03/25/2025**

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Melanie Jiskra, and I have had the privilege of serving as Executive Director for the past eight years at Aspen Academy.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students, including reductions in special education funding. These cuts would have a direct and detrimental impact on students who rely on these essential services.

Aspen Academy is a public charter school in Savage, MN, serving K-8 students with a strong academic program based on Minnesota standards and the Core Knowledge Sequence. Our diverse community includes 49% minority enrollment. With 15% of our student body (96 students) receiving special education services, we are committed to providing the individualized support they need to succeed. Continued special education funding is vital to maintaining our high standards and ensuring all students thrive.

Cuts to special education funding and operating revenue for Aspen Academy students would mean:

- Inability to retain and fairly compensate high-quality special education teachers, leading to staffing shortages.
- Reduction of the special education cross subsidy budget will impact funding availability for all students.
- Increased caseloads for special education staff, reducing individualized instruction and support.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students. Our students deserve equitable access to the resources they need to succeed. Now more than ever, we need your support to ensure that all children receive the education they deserve.

Sincerely,

Melanie Jiskra  
Executive Director 952.226.5943  
Melanie.Jiskra@aspenacademymn.org

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Amy Larsen and I am the superintendent at BlueSky Online Charter School.

As you consider **HF2433**, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed, deeply problematic, cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

- BlueSky educates students in grades 6-12. We serve 600 students, 47% of which are low income and 26% of which are students receiving special education services.
- BlueSky is one of the first Minnesota online schools, delivering instruction and support virtually while offering face to face opportunities on our student campus in Bloomington as well as through field trips at many locations throughout Minnesota.
- BlueSky students and families consistently report feeling well supported from the compassionate staff who go above and beyond to provide not only academic but social emotional instruction.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean less supports being given to those students who need it the most. Teacher support and peer interactions would decrease and our students would suffer from lack of resources which is already far less in a charter school than a traditional public school.

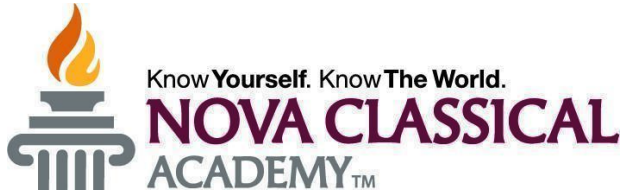
As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Amy Larsen  
Superintendent  
BlueSky Online Charter School







March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

My name is Brett Wedlund, and I am the Executive Director at Nova Classical Academy. I am writing in **strong opposition to HF2433** and the proposed special education funding cuts to charter schools included in the bill.

Nova Classical Academy is a public charter school in St. Paul serving more than 1,000 K–12 students. Nova consistently ranks among the top five schools in Minnesota for reading and math proficiency. In 2023, **we were the only school in the state recognized as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School**, and we are proud recipients of a *National Blue Ribbon Award*. Despite being one of the highest-performing public schools in Minnesota, **we are also among the lowest-funded**. During the 2023–2024 school year, **our per-pupil funding ranked 500th out of the 511** traditional school districts and chartered public schools in the state.

**A core element of our educational model at Nova Classical Academy is virtue education.** All of our students are taught to embody the cardinal virtues of **fortitude, justice, temperance, prudence, and wisdom**. What truly strikes me about the proposed cuts to charter schools in the Governor's proposed budget is **how deeply they conflict with the virtue of justice**.

Charter schools in Minnesota already face significant funding inequities. We are excluded from local optional revenue, safe schools aid, and several other streams of public funding. The Governor's proposed budget specifically targets students receiving special education services—**some of the most vulnerable and high-need youth in our state**. These are students who deserve more support, not less. Our special education population has grown by 5.1% over the last five years, and **the work we do to serve these students is critical**.

The proposed special education funding cuts would amount to **approximately a 1.9% reduction in Nova Classical Academy's overall budget**—not just our special education budget. This would have a tangible and **negative impact on the services we provide to students who rely on them most**.

I must also point out the **lack of prudence and wisdom in introducing this type of change just months before implementation**. We have worked intentionally to provide stability to our school community. Even through the pandemic, we have maintained high student and teacher retention, averaging 93% and 88.1%, respectively, over the past five years.

**Nova Classical Academy School District #4098**  
1455 Victoria Way, St. Paul, MN 55102

**P:** 651.209.6320 ■ **F:** 651.209.6325 ■ **E:** [contact@novaclassical.org](mailto:contact@novaclassical.org)

[novaclassical.org](http://novaclassical.org)

**One of the ways we have been able to provide that stability is by being prudent and thoughtful in considering the long-term implications of our decisions.** A change of this magnitude, implemented on the timeline of the next biennium's budget, **would prevent us from exercising the level of prudence that has helped create this stable environment for our community.**

It is disheartening to see someone who once served as an educator propose a budget that would jeopardize the education of students who need our services the most. **This is not a budgetary necessity—it is a policy choice.** While I cannot speak for each of you, I can say with certainty that **this proposal does not align with the mission of Nova Classical Academy or with the virtues we strive to instill in our students.**

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill I respectfully ask you to reconsider this proposal and to **advocate for a budget that reflects the virtues of justice, prudence, and wisdom for all public school students in our state.** Minnesota's commitment to education must include charter school students—particularly those receiving special education services.

It's a Great Day to be a Knight!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brett Wedlund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brett" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Wedlund".

Dr. Brett Wedlund  
Executive Director

**Nova Classical Academy School District #4098**

1455 Victoria Way, St. Paul, MN 55102

**P:** 651.209.6320 ■ **F:** 651.209.6325 ■ **E:** [contact@novaclassical.org](mailto:contact@novaclassical.org)

[novaclassical.org](http://novaclassical.org)



*New Discoveries*

*Montessori Academy*

1000 5th Avenue SE, Hutchinson, Minnesota 55350 320.234.6362(w) 320.234.6300(f) [www.newdiscoveries.org](http://www.newdiscoveries.org)

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Kirsten Kinzler and I am the Executive Director at New Discoveries Montessori Academy in Hutchinson.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

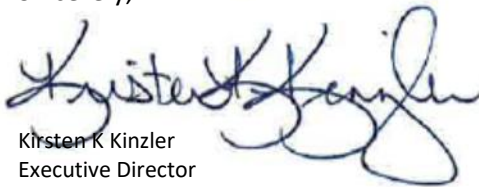
- New Discoveries has a total enrollment of 215 students and 101 of those students receive Special Education. This is 47% of our enrollment. Area districts encourage families to send their children to New Discoveries Montessori Academy with unique needs. In addition, county social workers and area therapists also recommend NDMA for students with special needs. We are seen as a trusted school that successfully supports students with diverse and complex needs in an inclusive, student-centered environment.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students at NDMA would be roughly a \$60,000 reduction in revenues over future years and would have an immediate and devastating impact. With nearly half of our student body receiving special education services, cuts to this funding would jeopardize our ability to meet even basic compliance requirements (MOE), let alone provide high-quality, individualized instruction.

For example, funding reductions would likely result in the loss of essential paraprofessionals, severely limiting support for students with high needs and compromising both safety and learning; increased caseloads for special education teachers, leading to less individualized attention and more difficulty meeting IEP goals; and delayed assessments and intervention due to less evaluation staff.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,



Kirsten K Kinzler  
Executive Director  
New Discoveries Montessori Academy



TO : [jody.withers@house.mn.gov](mailto:jody.withers@house.mn.gov) and [polly.cerkvenik@house.mn.gov](mailto:polly.cerkvenik@house.mn.gov)



# TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095

www.triowolfcreek.com

Mailing address: 29678 Karmel Ave, Chisago City, MN 55013

Campus address: 10363 Liberty Lane, Chisago City

FAX: 651-257-0576 Phone: 651-213-2095

Authorized by: Chisago Lakes Public Schools #2144

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Heather Johnson and I am the Administrative Assistant at TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095 located in Chisago City.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

At TRIO Wolf Creek, approximately 16% of our students are on IEPs and 33% qualify for free or reduced meals. We provide services for these students that can be more costly than that of a non-disabled and economically advantaged students. Due to already inadequate funding by the state and federal government, we see a 10% of costs hit to our general fund annually. Due to the proposed changes that only target charter schools, we would double that and see a 20% expense to our already tight general fund.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean that students who chose to attend our school because their home school district could not provide the level of service they require and deserve would again be failed by the MN public school system. It could potentially mean the loss of teaching jobs (and therefore tax revenue) if staffing cuts were necessary; and it could mean expensive repair bills down the road if the building could not be maintained adequately.

Please don't balance your budget on the backs of the disabled and economically disadvantaged.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Heather Johnson  
Admin. Assistant  
651-213-2097  
hjohnson@wolfcreekhs.org



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Grace Spears, and I am a concerned parent of a third grader at Eagle Ridge Academy.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

My son, Graham, is a third grader at Eagle Ridge Academy. We live in North Minneapolis where the public schools have some of the lowest ratings in the state. We are so happy to have alternative options for Graham outside of our as we greatly value quality education in our family. Eagle Ridge Academy continues to be one of the top performing schools and we hope to keep our son there through high school.

Reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students at Eagle Ridge would mean the educational resources we have come to depend on could be in jeopardy. Eagle Ridge Academy provides quality education to students all over the metro. The teachers and administrative work hard to foster a love of learning in all enrolled students.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,  
Grace Spears - Parent and Alum  
Eagle Ridge Academy



March 25, 2025

Co-Chair Youakim, Co-Chair Kresha, and Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

We write to express our strong opposition to the elimination nonpublic pupil education aid and nonpublic pupil transportation aid in H.F. 2433, the Governor's education budget proposal (see lines 9.29-9.31;14.26-14.29), which are proposed to take effect on July 1 of this year. This proposal defunds students based solely on their school choice and backs away from a bi-partisan, decades-long commitment to fund essential services for all students. Please leave the elimination of these important student aids out of your education finance bill.

Nonpublic pupil aid supports important student needs such as testing, textbooks, counseling, and nursing. The nonpublic transportation aid (which includes busing) is an essential service that makes it possible for many kids to attend a school that best serves their needs.

As stated in Minn. Stat. § 123B.40, which this legislation repeals: *It is the intent of the legislature to provide for distribution of educational aids such as textbooks, standardized tests and pupil support services so that every school pupil in the state will share equitably in education benefits and therefore further assure all Minnesota pupils and their parents freedom of choice in education.*

This expenditure is less than one half of one percent of the entire education budget, but is a vital support for nonpublic school students, many of who come from low-income backgrounds. Tricia Menzhuber, Principal at St. John Paul II Catholic School said at a February 11 hearing, "At JP II we serve 208 scholars kindergarten through 8th grade, with another 20 children in our early childhood learning center; 88 percent are students of color, and 76 percent meet the federal threshold for free and reduced lunches. We admit all students who apply. The majority of our families live on the margins of society."

This proposal is short-sighted from a fiscal standpoint. Nonpublic schools save the state alone (not including local units of government) approximately \$500 million dollars per year. If more students are priced out of nonpublic schools because schools have to raise tuition and have to attend public schools, both the state and public school districts will face increased budget pressures.

Our school families, who also pay taxes for the public system, deserve better. Trying to make up for over \$1000 in lost funding per student cannot be done overnight. And the last thing that we should be cutting are programs that provide direct aid to families, whether through tax credits, housing or healthcare assistance, or student education supports. Family economic security should be our number one priority.

Speaking about this proposed elimination in the February 11 hearing, Quentin Moore, Vice President of Advancement at Ascension Catholic Academy stated: “[This proposal] doesn’t make sense fiscally, it doesn’t make sense for our scholars and our families that we serve, and it will have tremendous detrimental impact to nonpublic scholars and families.”

We recognize that long-term budget numbers are cloudy, but there is still a surplus in this biennium. We encourage you to prioritize direct assistance to families over other budgetary items that, while not unimportant, should be considered amenities instead of priorities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Matt Hughes  
Assistant Director for Government Relations  
mhughes@mncatholic.org



768 Hamline Ave. S.  
Saint Paul, MN 55116  
(651) 285-4672  
[www.schoolofnorthernlights.org](http://www.schoolofnorthernlights.org)

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 24, 2025

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members,

My name is Rachel Ngendakuriyo, and I am the School Leader at St. Paul School of Northern Lights, a public charter school in St. Paul. As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding, funding that is critical to our ability to meet the needs of public school students in Minnesota.

In our school, nearly half of the students have a documented disability. Of those students, 32% receive Special Education services. Families of students with disabilities come to Northern Lights for the opportunity to learn in inclusive classrooms, where the services to which students are entitled are provided in ways that honor their unique strengths and interests alongside their neurotypical peers. Our implementation of universal design principles means students that might require Special Education services elsewhere have their needs met within our general education setting, reducing the overall burden on Special Education funding.

Reductions in special education funding and operating revenue would be hugely detrimental to our entire school community. As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Rachel Ose Ngendakuriyo  
School Leader  
(651) 285-4672  
[rachel.n@schoolofnorthernlights.org](mailto:rachel.n@schoolofnorthernlights.org)



March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Holly Stai, and I am the parent of a Kindergarten student at International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA), a public charter school in Edina that offers an International Baccalaureate curriculum through Spanish immersion.

As you consider HF2433 and the Governor's proposed budget, I urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to chartered public school students, especially those related to special education funding. My son is five years old, and we are already seeing early signs that he may need special education resources. These supports should never be on the chopping block. Cutting special education funding in public charter schools would mean that children who need these services may lose access to the unique and life-changing curriculums that charter schools provide.

Our school serves a diverse student population and offers a language immersion program that is not available in our home district of Shakopee. Similar immersion programs in neighboring districts are typically only available through a lottery. The smaller school environment of his public charter school provides my son with a strong sense of belonging and personalized support that would be difficult to replicate in a larger traditional setting.

If these budget cuts are enacted, the consequences will be significant. Charter schools already operate with lean budgets, and further reductions would compromise the quality of instruction, limit access to essential services, and potentially force schools to cut the very programs that make them unique. For families like mine who rely on public charter schools for opportunities not otherwise available, these cuts would be devastating.

As you draft your Education Finance Omnibus bill, I respectfully ask that you protect critical state funding for charter school students. Our children deserve equitable resources in their public charter schools, and they need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Holly Stai  
Parent  
International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA)



March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Rachel Karlov and I am a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher at International Spanish Language Academy.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

I teach at International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA), a tuition-free public charter school offering Spanish immersion and an International Baccalaureate curriculum. Our diverse student body includes many who require individualized instruction and specialized services to succeed. These proposed funding reductions would mean *fewer special education staff, increased caseloads, and diminished support for students with disabilities*—**undermining our ability to provide an inclusive, high-quality education.**

Chartered public schools are an essential part of Minnesota's education system, serving thousands of students with innovative, high-achieving programs. Yet, time and again, we are forced to fight for fair funding. I urge you to stand up for all public school students, including those in charter schools, by protecting special education funding and operating revenue.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, **I respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time.** Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Karlov  
5th Grade Teacher  
International Spanish Language Academy



March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair

Representative Youakim, Chair

House Education Finance Committee Members

75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd

St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Melissa Roth and I am a Special Education Coordinator/Teacher at Arcadia Charter School in Northfield, MN.

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

- Arcadia Charter School serves students in 6th through 12th grade. Special education students make up 37% of our school population. Many of these students have come to us from other schools having experienced bullying, or being lost in the shuffle.
- Arcadia Charter School is a unique place. We provide project based learning as well as traditional classes. We use restorative practices and create a community atmosphere like no other school that I have been apart of. This type of community has made a significant difference on the reduction of behavior referrals, and the ability to promote accountability rather than punishments. This type of programming allows students to know that they are cared for, that they matter, and help them learn the skills that they need to be contributing members of society.
- We are also unique in that our authorizer is Northfield Public Schools. We work collaboratively with the local school district to ensure that all students in Northfield are getting the education they need.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean difficulties in providing our students with the support that they need.

- We need our special education personnel in order to provide specialized instruction to our learners with disabilities.
- We need our school social worker to be able to provide these families with resources to connect them and get our students the mental health support that we need.

- We need to be able to purchase supplies in order to meet the needs of the learners who we serve. This would include specific adaptive equipment for learners to access their education.
- We need to be able to provide access to technology for those who cannot access it in their home.
- We need to be able to stay up on the evidence based practices, including the purchasing of curriculum materials in order to continue to be effective in educating the young people who come to us.
- We need to be able to continue to provide training in evidence based practices for our teachers.
- We need all of our paraprofessionals to support the learners and to be able to continue to provide training to them.

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

Melissa Roth  
Special Education Coordinator  
Arcadia Charter School





SMALL CLASSES  
CREATIVE TEACHING  
CONNECTED LEARNING

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

I am the executive director at the Minnesota Online High School:

**As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.**

*MNOHS as we are known attracts students who have not been welcomed in a traditional school environment. These students often come to us with academic deficiencies since they missed days or years of school. We have seen an increase in the population of students on IEP in the past few years and as a small charter school entity we continue to serve these students while receiving less funding than traditional districts to do so. Currently balancing a state budget on the backs of charter school students with disabilities is outrageous and irresponsible on your part. I implore you to reconsider this provision to the governor's proposed budget. We all need to work together to balance the state budget, but we cannot do this on the backs of children with disabilities, this is not who Minnesota is or ever will be. We are a respected education state that needs to put students first, now more than ever.*

*MNOHS is known as a school that allows students to be themselves, feel welcomed in whatever academic status they come to us in, often in need of credits and academic support. We serve students who have not had their needs met in other school districts and we do it well. We are a virtual school that allows students flexibility and continuous support in many ways. We have proven time and time again that we can serve student needs so please support us in doing so now and in the future.*



SMALL CLASSES  
CREATIVE TEACHING  
CONNECTED LEARNING

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean losing staff who provide those who needed support and not being able to serve student needs.

*As schools are being asked to do more and more for students, we cannot continue to lose funding and be asked to provide more support. We need your unwavering support at this time to allow us to continue doing what we do well, supporting student needs. Please, do not support the provisions of the governor's budget that target charter schools and charter school students.*

**As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.**

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Tracy Quarnstrom'. The signature is fluid and loops around itself.

Tracy Quarnstrom  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Online High School



# TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095

www.triowolfcreek.com

Mailing address: 29678 Karmel Ave, Chisago City, MN 55013

Campus address: 10363 Liberty Lane, Chisago City

FAX: 651-257-0576 Phone: 651-213-2095

Authorized by: Chisago Lakes Public Schools #2144

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Mike Hamernick and I am the Executive Director at TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095 located in Chisago City.

As you consider HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, I want to call your attention to the proposed deeply problematic cuts to chartered public school students. These cuts include reductions to special education funding.

At TRIO Wolf Creek, approximately 16% of our students are on IEPs and 33% qualify for free or reduced meals. We provide services for these students that can be more costly than that of a non-disabled and economically advantaged students. Due to already inadequate funding by the state and federal government, we see a 10% of costs hit to our general fund annually. Due to the proposed changes that only target charter schools, we would double that and see a 20% expense to our already tight general fund.

In my school, reductions in special education funding and operating revenue for our students would mean that students who chose to attend our school because their home school district could not provide the level of service they require and deserve would again be failed by the MN public school system. It could potentially mean the loss of teaching jobs (and therefore tax revenue) if staffing cuts were necessary; and it could mean expensive repair bills down the road if the building could not be maintained adequately.

Please don't balance your budget on the backs of the disabled and economically disadvantaged.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Mike D. Hamernick  
Executive Director  
651-213-2017  
mhamernick@wolfcreekhs.org



**YINGHUA  
ACADEMY**

**MANDARIN CHINESE IMMERSION SCHOOL**

March 25, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair  
Representative Youakim, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee Members  
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Dr. Luyi Lien and I am the Executive Director at Yinghua Academy, the highest ranked charter school in the state of MN. I am writing this letter with deep concerns about HF2433, the Governor's proposed budget, and its impact upon our school and charter schools in general.

Yinghua Academy is a special place. It is the first full immersion Mandarin charter school in the country. With 82% proficiency in math, 73% proficiency in reading, and 70% proficiency in science, Yinghua significantly outperforms the state average in all categories. Additionally, 80% of our 8th grade graduates speak Mandarin at a level where they are qualified to teach Mandarin to adults. Beyond test scores, our students gain a cultural fluency and competency that is unmatched through opportunities to travel abroad to China and Taiwan and within the school setting itself as they fulfill our mission of developing global citizens.

All of this happens with significantly less funding than district public schools. Yinghua Academy **already receives \$5.2M less** than a neighboring district school with the same number of students would receive. It is unconscionable to consider even deeper cuts at this time, especially given the uncertainty in our Federal funding streams.

It is especially problematic that a significant portion of these funding cuts are targeted at the most vulnerable students - those receiving special education programming. At Yinghua, 85 of our students (just over 10%) receive special education services as well as additional services such as speech and occupational therapy. Funding cuts in this area would have a number of impacts. Necessary staffing reductions which would result in higher student/teacher ratios. This would reduce the quality of services as students of different levels would have to be grouped together for instruction. Alternately, we would have to move general operating funds into special education, which would severely impact the operation of the school given the charter school funding gap.

As you put forth your Education Finance Omnibus bill, we respectfully urge you to protect this critical state funding for charter school students during this challenging time. Our students need your support now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Dr. Luyi Lien  
CEO/Executive Director  
Yinghua Academy