

Minnesota House of Representatives

March 26, 2025 5:48 PM

Bill aims to limit costly, time-intensive data requests to schools

By Brian Basham



Matt Ehling, board member of Minnesotans for Open Government, testifies in support of HF1999 before the House Education Policy Committee March 26. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Julie Greene, left, would put restrictions on public data requests to school districts. (Photo by Michele Jokinen)

– **UPDATED at 7:19 p.m.**

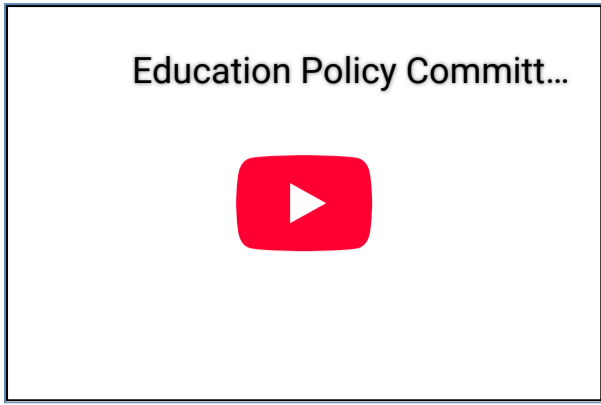
Owatonna Public Schools has been overwhelmed the past three years with a large public data request, costing the district more than \$400,000 and taking resources away from teaching students.

“We, in fact, were not able to hire four teachers as a result of this data request,” said Superintendent Jeff Elstad.

Additionally, Elstad said the district has received 12 anonymous data requests in the last three years, nine of which were ultimately abandoned, costing the district another \$40,000.

To save school districts and other government entities time and expense with data requests, [Rep. Julie Greene](#) (DFL-Edina) sponsors [HF1999](#) that, [as amended](#), would allow a public entity, like a school district, to provide data on a rolling basis.

“If a responsible authority has notified the requesting person that responsive data or copies are available for inspection or collection, and the requesting person does not inspect the data or collect the copies, the responsible authority may suspend any further response to the request until the requesting person inspects the data that has been made available, or collects and pays for the copies that have been produced.”



Education Policy Committee hearing on [HF1999](#) 3/26/25

The House Education Policy Committee took no action at Wednesday’s informational hearing.

“What we’ve seen in recent years is that Minnesota public schools have received an influx of data requests,” Greene said. “That in itself is not an issue, but what is an issue is that it’s been quietly putting a significant strain on valuable school resources.”

“And it’s extra-challenging if the request is large in scale, if it’s non-descript or if it needs redacting of personal data,” she added.

[Rep. Peggy Bennett](#) (R-Albert Lea) agrees there is a problem, but said it needs to be solved carefully. “We’re dealing with public transparency and we’re also dealing with fiscal responsibility with tax dollars. So, we’ve got to find that sweet spot.”

The [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act](#) allows individuals to request public data from government entities such as public school districts, but much of the private information must be redacted, which can be a time-consuming process.

Government entities can charge up to 25 cents per page for copies of requests fewer than 100 pages. Expenses of searching for and retrieving data can be included in the fee for larger requests.

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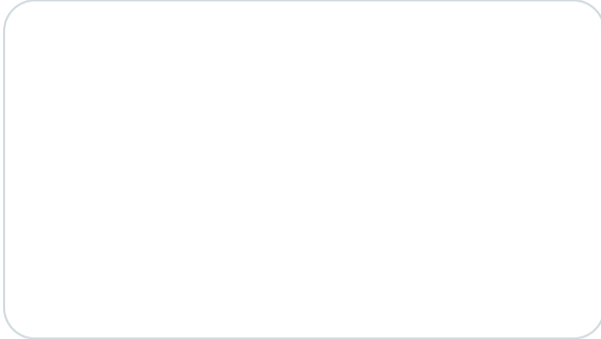
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