

Dear lawmakers,

My name is Kimberly Nguyen and I am parent of two elementary students attending Hopkins Public Schools (District 270). We are a vibrant education community just West of the Twin Cities. I have served as a Board Member of the Hopkins Education Foundation for three years and now am in my second term of on the Eisenhower + XinXing PTO board.

In my district, parents work hard to cover the funding gaps and support our schools. We build our own playgrounds. Eisenhower's playground was grant funded and parent installed a few years ago. We look outside the box for grants and cobble together funding to supplement the enormous expense of curriculum changes. In my school, we implemented new Social Emotional Curriculum (grant funded) and supplemental expenses covered by the PTO. That's a few examples of what we have done. We added a Mental Health Center to our high school when it became clear that federal and state funding would not materialize.

In my leadership role at the school, I have also been asked for things we were unable to accomplish. A few years ago, we were asked to save the elementary school nurses. We had budget shortages and the decision was to lay off 5 of the 6 licensed nurses and replace them with nursing paraprofessionals, which were overseen by the one retained licensed nurse. Our school nurse asked me if we could save our nurses. We could not. The year without licensed nursing staff came and went. The school community did rally and we did get budget to add licensed nurses in each of our six elementary buildings. But the years after layoffs and replacement would have lasting effects. When we let go our personnel with knowledge and passion for our people, we lose more than the services described in the FTE position description. We lose grant writers. We lose people with community knowledge that fill gaps that we don't even know about. We lose staff that provide intervention to the students in their programs. We lose people that know how to make our children the best version of themselves.

I am again being asked to save our staff, specifically the hourly staff associated with fee based programs. The current COVID education sector legislation has left them out. Please, work with the district leaders in your communities and add funding for our schools to retain our educators and food service providers. These are hard times and it's often hard to do the right thing in hard times, but I believe the Education Committees can prioritize our people and get it done. By taking care of the people who have shown up for Minnesota's most valuable assets (our students), we are ensuring that our schools will be at the ready to address COVID related learning loss and other COVID related disruptions that can be best tackled by retaining the people who already have a vested interest in our students. Let's do the right thing, right now. Invest in Minnesota's learners by ensuring fee based staff are retained. The return on that investment will pay off mightily year after year as these children overcome the challenges of the 2020 Spring Semester. Invest in Minnesota's Hourly educators because they are a key to our district's success during this crisis and in the coming school year. We need them and we need you to be part of the funding solution that allows are schools to keep them.

Thank you,
Kimberly Nguyen
Wayzata, Minnesota
Hopkins Public Schools
Constituent of Senator Paul Anderson and Representative Patty Acomb