



April 13, 2018

Chair Loon, House Education Finance Committee
Chair Erickson, House Innovation Policy Committee

Dear Chairs Loon and Erickson:

We wish to thank you for the openness and attentiveness with which you conducted your committee hearings and met with multiple groups of our member superintendents.

During the hearing on HF 3315 in the Ed Finance Committee, you may recall, Chair Erickson, that you stated that if these provisions had costs, they would be gone from the bill. You stated you knew the financial conditions of school districts and didn't wish to add burden to them.

Since there was insufficient time remaining for a Local Impact Fiscal Note, we took it upon ourselves to survey our members on the required district policy changes in HF 3315 that appeared to have cost implication. Seventy-two of our member superintendents responded. This represents one-third of membership and these superintendents are responsible for the education of approximately 60,000 students. The purpose of this letter is to bring those survey results to your attention.

As you can see in the table on page two, the estimated Out of Pocket expenses for the five mandates addressed in this survey would be \$63.05 per pupil. This is 51% of the \$124 increase in the formula for the 18/19 school year. In addition, the superintendents estimated the costs of redirecting staff from current tasks to these new mandates would be an additional \$26.39 for a total fiscal impact of \$89.44.

Redirecting staff time impacts rural schools in which all staff are doing multiple roles already. This spreads everyone thinner. As one superintendent put it "this is about priorities. If any of this comes in, something else has to go." This echoes the exchange between Rep. Thiessen and Commissioner Cassellius in committee this week over the effectiveness of the Third Grade Literacy Aid. The Commissioner said that when it was first implemented, districts focused on reading instruction, but with every succeeding year and new directions given to schools their attention moved on.

In the context of what do you truly want schools to do, we ask that you significantly scale back the policy requirements in HF3315. For example, rather than requiring a dyslexia specific screening for all children, we recommend more targeted language that would require screening for dyslexia for students showing reading difficulties or who are reading below proficiency. This focuses districts on the children who are having difficulty learning to read, something we can all agree is vital.

We have similar suggestions on the other proposed mandates, and would be happy to have a conversation. On the technology requirements, we recommend you take a close look at the responses of the MASA Technology Directors component group. It is thorough and detailed.

Mandates	# Districts with data	Per APU Out of Pocket Costs	Per APU In-Kind Staff Redirection	Total New and Existing Costs
Dyslexia Screening once between K and grade 2	61	\$8.87	\$5.50	\$14.37
Include in health curriculum for grades 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 substance abuse prevention, sexual exploitation (trafficking) prevention, and 'consent' to prevent sexual abuse.	58	\$13.37	\$10.15	\$23.52
Reporting Preliminary MCA Results within 30 days and Verified Results before start of School	50	\$3.24	\$2.53	\$5.77
Implement Technology Requirements on Districts, district issued devices, and providers	48	\$16.30	\$5.51	\$21.81
Require a specific course for government or civics credit in 11th or 12th grade beginning in 23/34 for 9th graders entering HS in 20/21*.	72	\$21.27	\$2.70	\$23.97
Totals		\$63.05**	\$26.39	\$89.44

*1/3 of reporting districts already require an 11th or 12th grade civics or government class. These are the estimated costs for the 68% of districts which would need to add this course.

**63.05 is 51% of \$124 increase in the formula for '18/19

We also surveyed our members on the vexing problem of families who for whatever reason are behind in their lunch payments. In these 72 districts, the unpaid debt for this year as of early April is \$304,163. This works out to \$5.07 per all students in these districts. We understand the shaming issue around lunches and the need to feed hungry children, but we ask that you not extend language regarding school lunches to other fees and activities unrelated to school meals.

The language in HF 3315 takes away significant tools districts have to collect unpaid lunch accounts. Without tools to recoup unpaid lunch fees, school districts will be forced to either raise lunch prices for all students to cover those who aren't paying or transfer funds from the general fund intended for the classroom to providing meals. Neither is a positive outcome for parents, students, staff or school boards.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of these concerns and data. We look forward to working with you as the process unfolds this session.

Sincerely,

Fred Nolan
MREA Executive Director

Sam Walseth
MREA Director of Legislative Affairs



Voice for Greater Minnesota Education

PO BOX 187 | ST. CLOUD, MN 56302 | (320) 762-6574 | MREAVOICE.ORG