



## 2022 Legislative Platform

MREA advocates on behalf of about 230 school districts, 30 education districts and additional associate members across Greater Minnesota to provide educational opportunities and close achievement gaps in Minnesota in these key ways.

### Education Revenue to Support Strong Public Schools

State aid for public education funding has not kept up with inflation, and school systems routinely struggle to attract and retain staff to meet student educational needs. The current funding model has led school districts to heavily rely on requesting taxpayer support through operating referendums, creating major disparities in educational funding and opportunities across the state. To help schools compete in an ever-tightening labor market and meet student needs, the state needs to significantly increase and stabilize funding for Minnesota's local public education systems.

#### KEY ACTIONS NEEDED

Provide rural school districts with financing tools that are available to members of the metro Intermediate Districts and with increased flexibility for existing revenue streams in SF 389 and HF 498.

- Redefine the “general education formula” to include a mix of state aid and a highly equalized board approved operating levy, consistent with the recommendations of the School Finance Reform working group recommendations submitted to the MDE on November 5, 2020.
- Include automatic inflationary increases as part of the state's budget process.
- Stabilize Basic Skills Revenue (Compensatory Aid) by streamlining direct certification between state agencies and creating census-based factors for generating this revenue.
- Reduce and freeze special education cross subsidies for each school district.
- Expand Voluntary PreK funding to all school districts.
- Create minimum revenue guarantees to ensure small schools can generate meaningful revenue for the stated purposes of each category of revenue.
- Ensure rural cooperative educational systems are included in revenue streams targeted at the students they serve.
- Fund targeted teacher development, mentoring and credentialing programs to help advance professional teaching careers.
- Increase “Safe Schools” funding to increase student mental health service capacity.

### Support Education Innovation at the Local Level

- Remove state agency barriers that restrict “Innovation Zone” development
- Oppose unfunded state mandates and “one-size-fits-all” approaches to state education policy
- Oppose changes to graduation requirements that restrict flexibility in the High School schedule.
- Allow school boards to renew operating levies previously approved through voter approved referenda.
- Allow school boards to replace a school board vacancy without a general election

### School Facilities

There is a significant funding gap between school districts that receive Long Term Facility Maintenance Revenue (LTFMR) and the “Alternative Facility” districts. The Ag2School bond credit has been critical for local school facility support, but additional state legislative action is needed to address rural school facility needs.

#### KEY ACTIONS NEEDED

- **Cooperative Facilities:** Provide same access to lease levy for rural education cooperatives
- **Debt Service Equalization (DSE):**
  - Create “Enhanced” DSE for newly consolidating school districts
  - Increase the DSE thresholds so more districts qualify for state support
- **Long Term Facility Maintenance Revenue (LTFMR):**
  - Close the funding gap for deferred maintenance by eliminating the revenue cap on LTFMR