

May 5, 2010

The Honorable Carol McFarlane  
MN House of Representatives  
223 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Representative McFarlane:

We are writing in support of legislation needed for Minnesota to win a Round 2 Race to the Top grant to both earn millions of dollars for our state's education system and initiate reforms that will benefit the children of our state for years to come. Other states and countries are moving aggressively to increase the quality of their education systems, and we can't risk being passed by.

The Obama Administration's Race to the Top competition lays out a series of common-sense reforms that will improve student achievement, and help Minnesota regain its leadership position in education. Detailed feedback from the US Department of Education's Round 1 review team highlighted our strengths, our gaps and an explicit roadmap for improvement. Based on the Obama Administration's review, we ask the legislature to:

1. Pass alternative teacher licensure legislation to expand the pipeline for additional talented individuals to teach in Minnesota's most troubled schools.
2. Create a statewide teacher and principal evaluation system that includes at least 35 percent of the evaluation based on student achievement. Further, the results of these evaluations must be explicitly linked to employment decisions, such as placement, promotions, compensation, tenure, and dismissals.
3. Give the education commissioner clear authority to intervene in the state's persistently low-achieving schools.

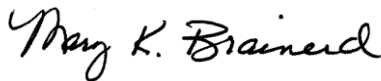
These are the changes that are clearly required to put Minnesota in contention for Round 2. Many other states have already taken these steps – and more are lining up to do so. Minnesota, of course, should not do this just for the money, but because it's the right thing to do to ensure we offer the best possible education for all the children of our state.

Minnesota has a long history of educational excellence, innovation, and leadership and our overall test scores and graduation rates are strong. However, these overall numbers obscure the unacceptable and persistent achievement gaps between student groups – changes to our current system are urgently needed.

We understand these are difficult issues, and we offer our support in asking you to pass the needed reforms and our commitment to help see the reforms through.

Time is short and the path is clear. Now is the time for collaboration, bold reform and – above all -- leadership. We can still win this race. Our future depends on it.

Thank you.



Mary Brainerd  
President and CEO, HealthPartners  
Chair, The Itasca Project



John Stanoch  
State President, Qwest Communications  
Chair, Minnesota Business Partnership Education Policy Committee

cc: The Honorable Mindy Greiling

Bradbury Anderson Vice Chairman Best Buy	Don Fraser Former Minneapolis Mayor and Congressman	Ken Powell Chairman and CEO General Mills
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Alan Van Houten  
Product Development Engineer  
Celleration

Kim A. Pearson  
CEO  
New Boundary Technologies

Jill Stever-Zeitlin  
Special Advisor to the Superintendent  
Minneapolis Public Schools

Scott M. Vogel  
Vice President & General Manager  
Global Outsourcing & Infrastructure  
Unisys

Judy Poferl  
President and CEO  
NSP MN

John Stuart  
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Global Partners, PTC

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