

Rep. David Bly

Column – Back to School

Minnesota House of Representatives

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Our lovely Minnesota summer is coming to a close. This time of year brings about many things, including the start of a new school year. Families throughout our state will be sending kids off to schools, from pre-K through college, and countless teachers, parents, support staff, administrators and others are prepared to give those students a chance to gain valuable life experience and the tools they need to succeed.

Minnesotans value our world class schools and work to ensure our students deserve the support they need to succeed in the classroom. There's some good news and bad news to report on that commitment we make to our next generation.

First, the good news is we're fully funding our K-12 schools. Despite House Republicans initially proposing to underfund education, we were able to work with Governor Dayton to make sure our schools got a 2% increase in funding, which just barely keeps them in line with inflation. Without that, we would have seen teacher layoffs, larger class sizes and cuts in the classroom—which is completely counter to our community's commitment to educating the next generation.

Second, despite efforts to privatize our education system, we were able to continue and boost funding for early learning programs. In fact, this month Governor Dayton announced a list of public school districts and charter schools receiving funding for pre-K education. There are 22,500 kids who will now be able to go to preschool and School Readiness Plus programs thanks to our efforts. Early childhood education is one of the best investments we can make for children, but thousands of young learners throughout the state still don't have access to affordable learning opportunities. I've heard from you and am committed to working with everyone I can to ensure that all Minnesota students have an opportunity to benefit from early childhood education.

Unfortunately, most of the students attending public universities this year are going to see a tuition increase. While I believe we need to make college more accessible and affordable for students, the Republicans in control of the legislature chose to underfund both the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State systems. The result is tuition increases and cuts to the programs schools offer. Minnesota ranks high in many things, but tuition isn't one we should be proud of. Our community's ability to prosper depends on the next generation getting the training they need at four year colleges, two year colleges and in skilled trades. Higher tuition makes that out of

reach for more students and any increased burden of debt will hold them back for years. I'll continue to fight to make sure everyone has an affordable opportunity to get ahead through a world class education.

It's clear that our community values education. You can see it in the teachers who spend their hard earned money on supplies for their students, in the parents who strive to give their kids the best education they can, and you can see it in the community activities we all take part in. It's up to all of us to foster an environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive. Together we can make this and future school years a success for our community.

Sincerely,

David Bly