



# STATE OF MINNESOTA

## Office of Governor Tim Pawlenty

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

May 13, 2008

The Honorable James Metzen  
President of the Senate  
322 State Capitol Building  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear President Metzen:

I have vetoed and am returning Chapter 310, Senate File 3001, the Omnibus K-12 Education Policy Bill.

This bill represents a step backward for education accountability and high expectations, which are essential for preparing Minnesota students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. Additionally, this bill features more unfunded mandates and it failed to garner significant bipartisan support.

I support the use of a "growth model" for measuring student achievement. It is important for such a model to be benchmarked against world-class achievement expectations and current academic standards enacted into law in Minnesota. S.F. 3001 creates a school "growth-to-the-norm" model which measures school performance against statewide student performance averages. We need to set high standards and expectations. This bill would mask underperformance of schools and students compared to rigorous standards.

While the second growth model included in the bill has a greater "growth-to-standards" focus, creating two separate reporting mechanisms for the school performance would serve to confuse the public and inhibit transparency. Moreover, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) previously submitted a growth-to-standards model to the U.S. Department of Education for approval. Approval of that model would result in the use of three growth models in

Sen. Metzen/SF3001

Page 2

May 13, 2008

Minnesota and data from all three would be reported on the school report card. Such a result would be cumbersome and confusing.

The bill also contains a number of new unfunded mandates for school districts, MDE, and other entities. Caution and restraint should be used when placing new requirements on already overextended school district and agency staff. Examples of unfunded mandates in S.F. 3001 include:

- A requirement that MDE complete an expedited rulemaking process to adopt state and district technology standards. That process would require state resources that are not provided. Moreover, MDE is already partnering with districts to develop technology guidelines for schools to utilize.
- A provision requiring MDE to "encourage" schools and districts to submit individual plans for closing the achievement gap.
- A number of unfunded task forces and reporting requirements.

Raising the student drop-out age from 16 to 18 years old is a good idea, and sends an important message to students regarding the value of staying in school. This provision does not address potential impacts on schools such as disciplinary issues created by students required to stay in school longer, additional space and material needs, added truancy enforcement, and additional per-pupil funding. Since the Legislature has delayed implementation of this provision and its fiscal costs until the 2011-12 school year, I am hopeful we will work together to address these issues in future legislative sessions.

I am supportive of the reading and literacy language in this bill. It will help young Minnesotans read at an early age and improve their chances of succeeding in school.

The opportunities and challenges our state and country face in a global economy are real and demanding. Minnesota parents want their children to have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed as they face this new reality. Parents, educators, policymakers, and the public deserve an accurate picture of the

Sen. Metzen/SF3001

Page 3

May 13, 2008

progress our students are making toward world-class standards. This bill misses an opportunity to work together to improve school accountability and transparency.

I hope the Legislature will join me in working to ensure Minnesota has a strong education accountability system, strong teachers and school leaders, and a commitment to high standards. It is my hope that we can work collaboratively to accomplish these worthy goals and to help ensure our students remain globally competitive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Pawlenty', written in a cursive style.

Tim Pawlenty  
Governor

Cc: Senator Lawrence J. Pogemiller, Majority Leader  
Senator David Senjem, Minority Leader  
Senator Charles Wiger  
Representative Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Speaker of the House  
Representative Marty Seifert, Minority Leader  
Representative Carlos Mariani  
Mr. Patrick E. Flahaven, Secretary of the Senate  
Mr. Al Mathiowetz, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives  
Mr. Mark Ritchie, Secretary of State