



An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth

March 21, 2023

Dear Representative Edelson and co-sponsors of HF 271,

Thank you for your time and care in addressing exclusionary discipline policies in schools. As many students across the state feel the pressure and stress of school environments, the Minnesota Youth Council appreciates your focus on student well-being and health in the right to non-structured time in school.

Unstructured time, such as meal breaks and recess, is often the first thing taken from students as a disciplinary measure, particularly for younger learners. A national survey from Voices of Play noted in 2018 that 86% of teachers surveyed delayed or removed students' access to recess as a disciplinary measure. Research has shown that exclusionary forms of discipline such as withholding recess, can lead to increased behavioral and academic struggles for students. As many schools establish lunch detention or exclusionary break policies, legislation is necessary to protect students and create productive learning environments by allowing students breaks during their school day. These unstructured-time detentions are also forms of "shadow discipline", disciplinary punishments that go unreported in school records. Using exclusionary discipline means that there is no transparency whatsoever in how students are being disciplined at school, and leaves parents wondering if their child is actually being fairly disciplined compared to other students in their class.

We are, however, concerned that gaps in legislation would limit these protections for students with Individualized Learning Plans (IEPS) who are often at the highest risk of losing unstructured time. Requiring schools to notify parents within 24 hours of use is a first step to informing families, but, when exclusionary discipline is to be used on a recurring basis for a child or as a part of a child's IEP, written parental consent should be mandatory. Schools should additionally make an attempt to replace any lost unstructured time to provide all students access to the social-emotional benefits of breaks during the school day. Creating inclusive classroom policies begins with involving families and should prioritize unstructured time as an essential part of the learning process.

Thank you for your work addressing the issues of students all over the state. We appreciate your time and hope that you also consider the benefits amending this legislation could have for students with IEPs across the state.

Signed,
The Minnesota Youth Council

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