

## Education Minnesota

# House leadership shows priorities with new layoff mandate

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ST. PAUL, Minn. March 16, 2017 – The leadership of the Minnesota House brought its first education bill (HF1478) of the 2017 session to the floor on Thursday, a measure to remove anti-discrimination protections for teachers during layoffs and mandate a round of time-consuming and expensive negotiations to replace them.

“This bill is a waste of time and a distraction from the significant challenges facing Minnesota students and educators,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “Go talk to students who are struggling with untreated mental illness, or educators who can’t afford health insurance, or administrators who can’t fill open jobs in rural schools. None of them are calling for new layoff rules.”

Local unions and school boards can currently negotiate any system of teacher layoffs they choose, or they can use a default system in state law based on seniority and licensure area. About 40 percent of districts have negotiated a system that departs from strict seniority.

The Legislature created the fallback system to protect teachers from arbitrary or vindictive layoffs, such as for giving low grades or speaking out about conditions in a school, or even because of the faith the teachers followed, their sexual orientation, or even their race. HF 1478 would eliminate the default language and compel districts to agree on their current language or negotiate a new system. The bill does not affect statutory language that explicitly gives districts the authority to terminate teachers for poor performance.

“No Minnesota teacher working today has had to give up something at the negotiating table to protect their colleagues from prejudice,” Specht said. “Now the House majority wants to put protections from bias on the same level as the back-and-forth over health insurance deductibles and access to school mailboxes. How could anyone who has seen the recent outbreak of anti-Semitism, overt sexism and hate speech toward immigrants, Muslims and LGBT communities say now is the time to remove protections from prejudice for teachers or anyone else?”

### About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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