

Education Minnesota

Hundreds of educators raise their voices at Capitol rally

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. May 18, 2019 – More than 400 educators from around Minnesota packed the Capitol Rotunda on Saturday to call for increased funding for public education and other policy changes to benefit the students in the state.

“These people actually know the needs of students. They know their names. They know their families. They know the communities they go back to at the end of the day,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, which organized the rally. “It is educators like these who need to be heard in a building like this.”

Seven frontline educators spoke Saturday. They shared stories about overcrowded classrooms, understaffed special education programs, struggling to make ends meet as paraprofessionals, lowering standards for teacher licensure and the steady erosion of school funding that makes it more difficult to meet the needs of students, especially students of color, every year.

“Denying adequate and equitable funding to our schools here in Minnesota is a denial of the American dream that we are all promised, and to be frank, it is racist,” said Jessica Davis, a math teacher from South St. Paul and the 2019 Minnesota Teacher of the Year. “But it’s more than that – it’s damaging to our metro community, it’s damaging to rural communities, it’s damaging to places that can’t pass a levy, it’s damaging to indigenous reservations. It’s damaging to who we are as Minnesotans.”

Several lawmakers attended the rally, including Gov. Tim Walz, a former teacher. He told the Capitol crowd he was hearing many ideas during the end-of-session budget negotiations he disagreed with.

“You know there are competing ideas for what Minnesota should look like,” he said. “I gotta tell you, I’m hearing a lot of great ideas from some folks that fit better in Mississippi and Alabama than they do in Minnesota.”

Video of the rally is available on the Education Minnesota Facebook page.

Earlier this year, Education Minnesota released its definition of fully funding E-12 public education, including reducing class sizes so students can get individual attention, bringing the state’s ratio of counselors to students in line with national standards, giving every 4-year-old access to a high-quality pre-K program, raising educator pay and reducing educators’ education debt. The cost was \$3.7 billion to \$4.3 billion for the biennium.

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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