

## Education Minnesota

# Education Minnesota supports bill to reduce discrimination in school discipline

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*ST. PAUL, Minn. Feb. 28, 2020* - The Minnesota Legislature can take an important step toward eliminating racial discrimination in school discipline by passing HF3396, said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota.

“We cannot achieve our goal of creating safe, welcoming and effective learning environments for all students when some groups of students are justifiably afraid of unfair discipline,” Specht said. “This bill offers clear, research-based steps in the right direction. There’s no reason to wait.”

Minnesota has one of the worst racial discipline gaps in the nation, which prompted the Minnesota Department of Human Rights to cite more than 35 public school districts and charter schools with violating the civil rights of students of color.

The department’s investigation found that students of color, particularly Native American, African American and Latino students, were significantly more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers. There is no evidence to suggest students of color misbehave at higher rates than white students.

“This bill is not about assigning blame for what happened in the past,” Specht said. “This bill is about reversing the trends and improving the lives of many students. It’s part of the paradigm shift Minnesota schools need.”

Specht highlighted three specific parts of the bill:

- It creates an excellent definition of non-exclusionary practices and calls for additional mental health services in schools.
- Creates a requirement for districts to start with non-exclusionary discipline, except in cases where there is physical harm.
- Gives suspended students the right to make up missed academic opportunities, requires plans for readmission and protects the rights of suspended students to counseling services.

The House Education Policy Committee took testimony on HF3396 on Friday.

## 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. More information about Education Minnesota is available at [www.educationminnesota.org](http://www.educationminnesota.org).

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