

THE WALZ-FLANAGAN BUDGET



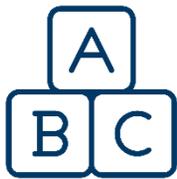
TO MOVE MINNESOTA FORWARD

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan are working to make Minnesota is the best state in the country for each and every child to grow up. That's why they're investing in schools to ensure that students receive a world-class education, expanding access to pre-K, child care, and paid family leave, and prioritizing health care and supports for our youngest Minnesotans to ensure that families have the resources they need to succeed.

EXPAND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING

“In our first year in office, we fought to protect 4,000 prekindergarten seats across the state. Now, we’re working to expand prekindergarten for 23,000 kids.”



Expand Access to Prekindergarten

Access to high-quality prekindergarten benefits children from all backgrounds, especially children in low-income families. This investment will fund more than 6,000 new public pre-K seats through a mixed delivery model requiring a combination of school-based programs (40%), Head Start (30%), child care centers and family child care programs (30%). The investment also extends the duration of programming for existing pre-K seats. This expansion, which in total could serve more than 23,000 eligible young learners, supports the Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s Due North Education Plan goal of ensuring that every child receives a high-quality education, no matter their race or zip code. The program would ensure ease of navigation and choices for families, as schools and communities work together to promote high-quality, cohesive early learning systems.

“A family of four in Greater Minnesota making \$45,000 a year will save about \$14,000 a year on child care. In the metro, a family of five making \$60,000 could be looking at a savings of over \$30,000 a year.”



Make Child Care More Affordable for More Minnesota Families

Significant investments in child care assistance will provide long-term stability for providers, working families, and their children. The proposal will help thousands of providers stay open and provide stable care so families can work and children can thrive. While changes last year made improvements, the Walz-Flanagan proposal will ensure financial predictability for child care providers and improve their capacity to meet challenges such as the pandemic. This proposal increases provider payment rates to the federal standard covering more of the costs of providing care and increases access to affordable child care for 15,000 families and 30,000 children.



Eliminate Waiting Lists for Child Care for Eligible Families

Child Care Assistance helps many eligible, low-income Minnesotans who need assistance paying for child care, but often times, the waiting lists for these child care slots can be up to two years long. Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan know that Minnesota families who are eligible for child care assistance cannot afford to wait.

Fully funding the Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance Program will eliminate waiting lists and improve access to child care for Minnesota families and children. Right now, funding for Basic Sliding Fee assistance is capped, so families who are eligible sometimes must wait to access child care. The Walz-Flanagan proposal will allow Basic Sliding Fee child care assistance to provide help paying for child care to all eligible families and children and do away with waiting lists, where 500 to 8,300 families have faced delays over the past decade. Full funding will allow Basic Sliding Fee child care assistance to serve about 16,000 Minnesota families including 32,000 children.



Support Child Care Providers Affected by the Pandemic

The Walz-Flanagan Budget to Move Minnesota Forward includes funding to stabilize child care providers and programs experiencing extreme financial hardships as they continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has worsened Minnesota's child care shortage, burdening providers with difficulties including lost revenue and higher costs amid a shortage of workers. With a quarter of Minnesota families lacking reliable access to child care, the Walz-Flanagan Administration is proposing continued financial support and extension of funding for local child care support services, including technical assistance for child care providers, training and recruitment of qualified staff to work in the child care sector, child care shared services alliances, and support for provider business practices through technology access and supports. These investments will result in more Minnesota families with access to affordable, quality child care.



Expand Early Learning Scholarships

Early Learning Scholarships increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for young children with the highest needs to support the development of young children and provide connections for families. In an effort to promote a cohesive early childhood system that can support families all the way through kindergarten entry, the Walz-Flanagan proposal shifts the focus of the scholarships to prioritize 0–3-year-olds in the highest need populations. The proposal nearly triples the current amount spent per year on direct scholarships to families, reaching an additional 10,000 children per year.

GIVE FAMILIES THE BENEFITS THEY DESERVE



Provide Paid Family and Medical Leave

The Walz-Flanagan Budget to Move Minnesota Forward creates a Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance program. Right now, too many Minnesotans, especially those in lower-wage jobs, must make the unfair choice between a paycheck and taking time off work to care for a new baby or a family member with a serious illness. This can lead to significant economic instability for families during some of their most challenging times. The creation of this program is necessary to support businesses, ensure more equitable economic opportunities for Minnesotans, retain more women in the labor force, and positively impact the lives of children.



Support Families with Sick and Safe Leave

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how critically important it is for people to stay home from work when they are sick. Workers who go to work sick risk spreading illness to coworkers, customers, and the public. But too many Minnesotans don't have access to paid sick leave and are forced to choose between going to work sick and paying their bills. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor's proposal would ensure workers can accrue up to 48 hours per year of paid sick leave for when they need to recover from an illness, go to a medical appointment, care for a child during a school closure, or get care and assistance due to domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual assault.

STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Increase State Funding and Reduce Cross Subsidies for Every School

Schools are the center of our communities. Every day, our educators do all they can to set our students up for success. Yet, they need more support to provide an equitable education for all of Minnesota's students. The Walz-Flanagan budget invests an additional 2% on the general education formula to stabilize funding and reduces the Special Education and English Learner Cross Subsidies back to 2019 levels. These are the most flexible aids schools receive, providing school districts and charter schools decision-making power to meet the unique needs of each student and school. Other financial streams build off the formula, multiplying the impact for all students across the state.



Create Educator Career Pathways

Minnesota is experiencing a critical shortage of educators due to the stresses of the pandemic. In addition, the state has one of the lowest percentages of teachers of color and American Indian teachers represented in the teaching force in the nation. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor propose to strengthen teacher recruitment across the state by linking high school programs with postsecondary teacher prep or state-approved educator programs and licensure. Emphasis will be placed on programs that target recruitment of underserved and underrepresented students and under-represented prospective teachers.



Expand Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program

About 34% of K-12 students are nonwhite, while teachers of color and American Indian teachers make up only 5 percent of full- and part-time teachers. The Walz-Flanagan budget increases access to opportunities for people of color and Indigenous people to pursue a career in teaching by expanding Grow Your Own Teacher Training Programs, which benefits students of color and Indigenous students who see themselves in their educators. Having teachers of color and Indigenous teachers also benefits white students who experience teaching and learning through a different lens.



Reduce Financial Burdens for Aspiring Teachers

Minnesota schools are facing teacher shortages in many areas. A lack of sufficient, qualified teachers carries significant consequences for students. Teachers are the primary in-school influence on student achievement. The teacher shortage is not necessarily a lack of new teachers entering the profession; rather, it is keeping teachers in the profession that is the greater contributing factor to the shortage. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor propose covering the costs for the Minnesota Teacher Licensure

Exam and teachers' first Professional Teacher License. The Walz-Flanagan budget also proposes teacher retention bonuses for those new to the profession.



Establish Statewide Teacher Mentoring Program

The Governor and Lieutenant Governor believe in the power of educator mentoring so teachers stay in the classroom. The Walz-Flanagan budget strengthens the retention of early career teachers by establishing a Statewide Teacher Mentoring Program to support and improve experiences of professional educators, which will help create equitable learning opportunities for students of color, Indigenous students and students from low-income families.



Recruit and Retain Education Support Professionals

Education support professionals (ESPs, also known as paraprofessionals) are a critical yet unsung part of the educator workforce, providing a variety of services to children and families in public school systems. This workforce also happens to be more racially and ethnically diverse than licensed teachers and principals, so they are critical to full representation in the community. Some ESP staff are assigned to work in settings working directly with children with disabilities. With this assignment comes additional responsibilities and training that schools must provide annually. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend \$15 million per year for ESP training and development.

ENSURE NO CHILD GOES TO BED HUNGRY



Provide Free School Meals

School meals are critical for student health and well-being and provide students the nutrition they need throughout the day to learn and grow. Kids who receive school meals are more likely to eat nutrient-dense foods that have been shown to help students better learn and participate in school. The Governor proposes a \$183 million investment in the first year and 4% increases each following year to ensure no student goes hungry at school by providing free breakfast and lunch to students attending any Minnesota school that participates in the national school breakfast and lunch programs.



Support Food Sovereignty for Tribes

The Walz-Flanagan administration is proposing funding to improve access and equity for Tribal and American Indian food programs, recognizing and promoting food sovereignty and sustainability. Indigenous nations and communities experience health disparities connected to historical trauma, including genocide, loss of land, and forced placement of Native children in boarding schools, with a history of inadequate and harmful federal government policies resulting in chronic poor nutrition. The Walz-Flanagan food sovereignty proposal will strengthen food access and sustainability for American Indian communities. Fewer American Indians will experience food insecurity, while Tribal Nations and American Indian organizations will have resources to develop food infrastructure in culturally relevant ways.



Addressing Hunger and Improving Minnesota's Food System

The COVID-19 pandemic has made food security and access to nutritious foods for all Minnesotans more difficult, with growing numbers of Minnesotans turning to food shelves or utilizing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Walz-Flanagan proposes funding to invest in food shelves, food banks, and meal programs that provide nutritious food to Minnesotans. The proposal includes providing culturally connected foods as well as investments in food shelf infrastructure, including freezer equipment and dry storage space. The Walz-Flanagan proposal also expands outreach and assistance so that eligible Minnesotans can enroll and receive SNAP benefits. In 2021, more than 3.8 million visits were made to food shelves. The Walz-Flanagan Budget to Move Minnesota Forward will bolster the food system, reduce food insecurity, and improve Minnesotans' access to nutritious food.

ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS FOR YEARS TO COME



Boost Reading Proficiency Statewide

The ability to read proficiently has a significant positive impact on the success of students, particularly students from historically disenfranchised groups. Minnesota's statewide assessment data shows that reading proficiency has been stagnant for more than fifteen years and trends are not improving. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend an annual allocation of \$5 million to effectively implement the Minnesota BOLD: A Birth through Grade 12 Action Plan for Literacy Achievement. Included in this proposal are both policy and funding recommendations that will encourage schools to implement evidence-based core instruction rooted in the Science of Reading. The budget also includes an expansion to Reach Out and Read because we must continue to partner with our health providers who parents trust and who know literacy is critical for health outcomes.



Advance Youth Engagement and Employment Opportunities

Youth employment and engagement have been challenging during the pandemic as many young Minnesotans have lost their jobs. We need to ensure our students are receiving services and opportunities outside of the school day to develop skills and engage. This multi-agency out-of-school time package invests \$47.3 million over the next three fiscal years for a cross-agency youth engagement, out-of-school time and employment programs that provide grants to community organizations and schools to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate youth engagement, development, employment, and training opportunities.



Expand and Sustain Full-Service Community Schools

The full-service community school model can improve student outcomes in schools where other school improvement efforts have not been successful. Evidence suggests the wrap-around supports that are foundational to the full-service community school model can help improve graduation rates while improving several outcomes related to school climate, including student attendance and behavior outcomes. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend \$5 million per year in to expand and sustain Minnesota's full-service community schools grant program. Additionally, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend investment in wrap around supports including school-based health centers, community resource hubs, student parent centers on college campuses, state IT system innovations, and cross-agency coordination for children and families.



Waive College Application Fees

The cost of a college application should not be a financial barrier preventing Minnesotans from pursuing higher education. With application fees ranging from \$20 to more \$55, coupled with the fact prospective students will often apply to multiple colleges, the cost of applying can add up quickly and may discourage students from completing the application process. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend funding a pilot program to eliminate college application fees for undergraduate post-secondary applications at Minnesota’s public, private non-profit, and tribal colleges. This investment will ensure a student’s postsecondary journey does not end before it has a chance to begin.



Help Minnesota’s College Students Stay in School

The pandemic has exacerbated inequities for students attending Minnesota higher education institutions. Increased insecurity around food, housing, and child care has forced too many students to choose between continuing their education and dropping out. Last year, the state’s Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students (EAPS) grant program—which connects students with emergency funding to meet their immediate basic needs—received significantly more applications than the current appropriation could support. This proposal expands EAPS to help ensure every student has the support they need to finish their postsecondary education. Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan will also establish the Student Parent Center Grant program to help address the unique needs of current and expecting parent as they pursue their postsecondary goals.

PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Ensure Access to Student Support Personnel

For years, Minnesota has had one of the worst student-to-counselor ratios in the country. Our students’ mental health is declining, as evidenced by the most recent Minnesota Student Survey and feedback from students and families on the effects of COVID-19. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend \$77 million over the next three fiscal years to address shortages of school support personnel services that benefit students’ social, emotional, and physical health. Funds would be used to hire counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and chemical dependency specialists in schools across the state and invest in the future workforce of this critical area.



Expand School-Linked Behavioral Health Grants

More than ever, families are in need of clinical supports to effectively cope with behavioral health needs that have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota’s School-Linked Behavioral Health program helps schools and families identify and treat mental illness and substance use by providing assessments, counseling sessions, and tools for teachers and staff to help support students – all while keeping students close to home and in school. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s proposed \$6 million annual investment in School-Linked Behavioral Health Grants will address the increased need for community behavioral health services for both students and school staff.



Enhance School-Based Mental Health Screening

Screening to identify students' needs for mental health services, and referral to school and community providers of those services, is a critical component of an effective comprehensive school mental health system. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor recommend \$10 million annually to fund the statewide implementation of mental health screening and referral systems in schools by school-based mental health staff, including school administrators, to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of Minnesota students and staff.



Invest in Early Childhood Mental Health Programs

Minnesota families, schools, and early care and education providers have consistently highlighted the need for mental health support and trauma-informed care for children and families, beginning at birth. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor's investment of \$4 million annually would fund grants to increase access to infant and early childhood mental health consultation for school-based early childhood programs. This would support an early childhood mental health system of care to meet the needs of the state's children by integrating services with local schools and early childhood programs that serve young children and their families.



Expand Inpatient Mental Health Care for Minnesota Children

A \$26 million investment over the next three years will support retaining, creating, and expanding inpatient mental health beds for children. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified rising levels of pediatric depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders especially among young Minnesotans. The funding will create approximately 100 new children's residential psychiatric treatment facility beds, which will help build up the state's continuum of care. The Walz-Flanagan Administration's proposal will ensure that children with the most severe psychiatric needs are able to receive appropriate care and treatment in the most appropriate setting.

ENSURE A HEALTHY BEGINNING FOR EVERY YOUNG MINNESOTAN



Ending Childhood Homelessness

No child should be born into homelessness in Minnesota. An estimated 5,000 children not yet in school are identified in certain state programs as being at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Governor and Lieutenant Governor's budget expands the successful Homework Starts with Home program into early childhood to prioritize prenatal to pre-K families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. The budget also provides rent and other housing assistance to an estimated nearly 1,500 Minnesota families each year who are expecting children or have young children and lack housing stability.



Ensuring Healthy Beginnings and Healthy Development

All parents and babies deserve a healthy start and support to reach their milestones together. The early years of a child's life are critical as the brain develops and depends on proper nutrition, environmental factors, and care that is nurturing and responsive. A package of proposals makes significant investments to reach new babies and their families, including a historic investment in evidence-based home visiting services for every child born in Minnesota and longer term supports for new families who may need extra support,

such as those experiencing homelessness, those affected by incarceration, and children with special health needs.

The Walz-Flanagan budget includes community solutions for young families; expanded access to doula care that is linked to better parental and postpartum outcomes; a child-centered navigation system called Help Me Connect that provides families with young children access coordinated, comprehensive, culturally relevant, family-centered services; creation of a new streamlined early childhood screening system to remove burdens for families; a collaborative to end infant mortality; and additional multi-sector approaches to improve outcomes within Black, American Indian, non-white communities of color, and communities in Greater Minnesota.



Covering All Kids

The Governor and Lieutenant Governor's budget includes funding to provide children and youth under 21 with 12-month continuous Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility to reduce health coverage interruption that too often prevents Minnesota kids from seeing a doctor when they need to. This builds on continuous postpartum coverage so that any child over the age of one determined to be eligible for MA will retain coverage until their annual MA renewal. This would result in nearly 16,000 Minnesota children and youth per month keeping their health insurance.