

Dear St. Paul City Council,

I am the Children's House (PreK and Kindergarten) teacher and current School Board Vice President at Metro Deaf School. Also, my husband and I are Deaf parents of a hearing child who attends Great River School. A smaller charter school, which allows for our child to flourish and for us as a bilingual family to feel like a part of a school community. I am writing about the topic at your 3/10 meeting discussing halting conduit revenue bonds for charter schools.

Metro Deaf School is in Saint Paul near Como on the corner of Lexington and Energy Park. We serve 35 school districts around the metro providing a state of the art education for Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing students. We serve over 115 students ages 3-21 years old. And we are an extremely diverse school that looks like the Twin Cities with 65% students of color and 40% first or second generation refugees. We are unique in that of the 35 school districts we serve, 34 of those school districts place students with us and use Metro Deaf as an educational option for their Deaf and DeafBlind students. We have families move to the Twin Cities from all over the U.S. to place their children in our program. We are a gem in Saint Paul and in the state of Minnesota.

I would love for you to meet our students and staff. I would ask that you visit us and see for yourself what our school is like and how we are meeting the needs of students and families. It is scary to have a Deaf or a DeafBlind child and parents grieve. Having an educational option that meets their needs in a fully accessible environment using both American Sign Language and written English is a big relief. We have speech services, occupation therapy, physical therapy, counseling, sign language therapy, DeafBlind instruction, and orientation and mobility. We offer free sign language classes to parents along with other educational supports and community events. Lastly, we have a social work and mental health team who work with students and families.

When making decisions for Saint Paul's future, I hope you remember schools like ours and the families and students who are impacted by those decisions. Currently we are looking at the options for trying to build a gym for our students. We have tried renting gym space from Saint Paul Parks and Recreation as well as other schools and we have been turned down at every turn. Our students need a place for gross motor activity, physical education, and sports.

I assume most parents who make the difficult decision to change schools did not make the decision lightly, many of them have children with disabilities, unique needs, are immigrants and/or people of color. These schools give parents a choice in supporting their child(ren) in what they need to thrive. As a Deaf child with hearing parents, my parents did not have the choice of sending me to MDS. Instead, they made one of the most difficult decisions to send me to a Deaf school where I lived in the dorm and only went home on the weekends.

If successful charter schools are negatively targeted by the city council policies, what will happen to these children? Please support our school and other charter schools by not voting for this policy. If you have any questions about Metro Deaf School please contact me or our Executive Director, Dr. Susan Lane-Outlaw, at [slaneoutlaw@mdsmn.org](mailto:slaneoutlaw@mdsmn.org) or call at 651-259-1050. We would also like to invite you to take a virtual tour (for now or in person next year) of Metro Deaf School when you are available.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

**Amanda Rausch**

***Children's House Teacher/Team Leader - Orange Team***

Metro Deaf School - 1125 Energy Park Drive - St. Paul, MN 55108