

Dear St. Paul HRA board members,

First off, thank you so much for your service to our community. You play an important role in ensuring the continued vitality of St. Paul. Your work makes such a difference. Thank you.

We understand that you will be looking at the charter school bonding study soon, and that a vote may be on the table. You are probably under pressure from multiple sides of this complex question of whether or not to allow St. Paul charter schools to continue to use bond financing for their facility developments.

Please forgive us as we reach out to add our own bit of pressure in **support of school choice and charter schools, and policies that lead to efficiently run taxpayer-funded public schools of all shapes and sizes.**

We believe you know about all of the intricacies of this question already so we won't waste your time telling you what you already know.

**Instead, we will tell you about our own experience living in Saint Paul:**

On our block, no two families send their kids to the same school, and the kids and families still have close neighborhood friendships. And every family appears to love their school of choice. It is so cool at neighborhood block parties and running into neighbors at the grocery store, to learn what's new with their kids and how things are going at their schools. People take pride in their schools and the choices they've made for their kids. **Instead of competition between schools at this neighborly level, we see warmth, interest and understanding.** And we see how making a conscious choice about where to send our kids to school fosters whole family involvement and interest in all of our kids' lives.

**We love that our St. Paul community embraces diverse educational interests and needs.** It would be a shame, in our opinion, if the St. Paul HRA decided to play a part in reducing school choice, which is such a strength in Saint Paul. All cities are not so fortunate. We count ourselves lucky to live in a city where everyone - not just the affluent - have a say in where their kids go to school. And we love that there are many wonderful, distinct options to choose from. Very little needs tweaking in the current system, and families are benefiting in so many ways by having options that we did not have when we were growing up.

**We are also rooting for the success of the Saint Paul Public School District.** This isn't an either/or question for us. Our kids have gone to both and had good experiences. We love all schools. We agree - along with everyone we know - that it is absolutely unfortunate that the St. Paul Public School District is suffering from budget issues related to students leaving the district. And we believe those budget issues are for the Saint Paul Public School District to solve, and we are confident it will. The majority of Saint Paul families continue to choose the SPPS. It will survive and continue to thrive whether or not charter schools can access the municipal bond market. So, we believe that the HRA making policy decisions that cripple smaller public schools in an effort to somehow eventually force students and families back into the larger district - and reduce parents' power to make their own decisions for their families - is simply not the answer.

We also understand that it is costly for the city to give up the tax revenue of for-profit establishments built in Saint Paul. **There must be creative ways to recoup that lost tax revenue without limiting the financing options of our public charter schools.**

Municipal bond financing helps our public schools run efficiently. And we want our tax dollars spent efficiently by our publicly funded schools - whether they're small public charters or St. Paul Public School District schools. **Please continue to provide this fiscally responsible option to our public charter schools so that they can continue to spend our tax dollars wisely.**

Please support policies that help all public schools run efficiently and encourage families to continue to decide what is best for their children. Please support continued charter school bond financing efforts.

Again, thank you for all you do for our city. And thank you for your time and attention.

Bill and Jennie Winter  
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