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As the only nationwide tool we have to consistently measure student learning, NAEP plays a critical role in helping us understand how students are doing—not just across the country, but right here in Minnesota.

Minnesota has long had one of the widest achievement gaps in the nation. In Minneapolis, where students of color make up the majority of the public school population, the differences in academic outcomes between student groups remain stark. NAEP helps shine a light on these disparities. Without it, we lose one of the only ways to clearly and fairly compare how students—across race, income, language, and ability—are doing, both within our state and compared to their peers nationally.

After the COVID pandemic, NAEP helped us quantify just how much learning was lost. And it pointed us to places that were getting it right. One of those places was Mississippi, where big improvements in literacy outcomes—particularly for Black students—became a model for other states. NAEP data helped make that story visible and helped shape Minnesota's own literacy reforms, including the READ Act passed in 2023. We need this kind of information to continue identifying what's working and applying it locally.

Beyond the numbers, disaggregated NAEP data is a civil rights tool. It forces us to confront how well we are—or aren't—serving students from historically underserved communities. That's especially critical in Minnesota, where racial and economic inequities in education have persisted for decades. If we lose NAEP, we lose a key source of truth. And if we're serious about closing gaps and improving outcomes, we can't afford that.

Unfortunately, reductions in staffing at the U.S. Department of Education are now threatening NAEP's future. This assessment takes technical expertise and deep analytical capacity to do well. Cutting the team behind NAEP means delays, limitations in data quality, and fewer insights for decision-makers at every level—including right here in our own state.

We can't fix what we won't measure. If we want to give every Minnesota student the opportunity to thrive, we need to keep investing in tools like NAEP that help us see clearly and act decisively.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to our kids.