Close the English Learner (EL) Cross-Subsidy

**Key Facts:**
- **THE EL POPULATION HAS INCREASED 200% IN THE LAST 20 YEARS.**
- **90 SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
- **MORE THAN 125 LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
- **95% OF THE STUDENTS GENERATING EL REVENUE ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR**
- **SOME EXAMPLES OF EL CROSS-SUBSIDIES AROUND MINNESOTA ARE:**
  - ALBERT LEA AREA SCHOOLS ($1,343,920)
  - LAKEVILLE ($1,412,241)
  - MINNETONKA ($1,103,167)
  - MOORHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ($2,843,597)
  - ST. CLOUD ($3,109,106)
  - ROSEMOUNT APPLE VALLEY EAGAN ($5,610,828)
  - ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS ($23,276,340)
  - WILLMAR ($1,325,486)
  - WORTHINGTON ($1,618,435)

**Issue**

Minnesota has become more diverse with over 70,000 English Learner (EL) students. In meeting this challenge, school districts have had to add trained EL staff to serve students at the various levels of English proficiency, including co-teachers, interpreters, training for regular instruction teachers and instruction materials. Districts have also had to add services and staff to better engage multi-lingual families and offer extended day and year programs to accommodate needs. Minnesota law provides that EL students are eligible for EL revenue for up to seven years. Although, additional instruction is required beyond the seven years if a student is not yet proficient in English.

In recent years, districts are experiencing increases in EL students and are grappling with an EL cross-subsidy. The enclosed spreadsheet provided by the Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives, shows EL revenue by school district estimated for FY 2021-22. Note districts spent $176.9 million on EL services for that year and received $58.6 million in EL revenue, leading to a cross subsidy of $118 million for the year. Districts use general fund dollars to cover these cross-subsidy costs, which can result in significant changes district-wide such as larger class sizes and fewer course offerings.

A growing number of school districts are severely impacted and limited by this cross-subsidy. The large shift of funding dollars from regular instruction to EL inhibits districts from providing equitable educational instruction, supports and extracurricular opportunities (as compared to other districts). Districts with lower EL students do not see the same level of impact. These funds are badly needed in districts already impacted by high rates of poverty (Free Reduced Price Lunch) and diversity. Holding this cross-subsidy steady does not help; it simply prolongs the annual funding shortfall and ensures the effects will continue.

Districts acknowledge and are appreciative of the $2 million provided in the last legislative session for additional EL revenue for the next four years. This is far short of the necessary commitment and was not included in the base. This gap in funding, along with the underfunding of special education and lack of inflation in the general education formula, has put a significant strain on districts’ ability to provide the necessary individual instruction to ensure success for all students, thus contributing to the achievement gap. The time has come to eliminate the funding shortfall.

**Ask**

MSBA asks the Legislature to eliminate the English learner cross-subsidy by 2025.