



January 15, 2026

As Minnesota education organizations, we write to emphasize the urgent need to reaffirm federal policies that protect student safety and ensure the stable operation of schools and other essential community institutions.

Since 1993, federal policy has limited immigration enforcement activities at sensitive locations, including schools, healthcare facilities, and places of worship, as well as their immediate surroundings. These longstanding protections established clear boundaries that safeguarded students, staff, and families while allowing critical community services to operate without disruption.

Recent federal statements have raised concerns that immigration enforcement may expand to include schools, hospitals, and churches. Minnesota school leaders report growing confusion and anxiety among parents, staff, and community members about whether enforcement actions could occur in school buildings, parking areas, or adjacent sidewalks.

Enforcement activity at or near schools causes student distress, disrupts learning, undermines a sense of safety, and places educators in roles beyond their expertise and responsibility.

To protect students and maintain safe, stable learning environments, we respectfully request the restoration of a clear, publicly affirmed federal standard designating schools as locations where immigration enforcement will not occur. Reestablishing explicit boundaries will reduce confusion, support coordinated responses, and allow schools to fulfill their core educational mission while respecting federal law.

Schools are the heartbeat of our communities. Families and employers depend on them to remain open and safe. Strong, clear federal safeguards are essential to preserving student safety, operational stability, and public confidence.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)  
Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)  
Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD)  
Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE)  
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS)  
Minnesota Community Education Association (MCEA)

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MAASP)  
Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)  
Minnesota School Personnel Administrators (MASPA)  
Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA)  
Minnesota School Public Relations Association (MinnSPRA)  
Minnesota Parent Teacher Association (Minnesota PTA)

TO:

U.S. Reps. Brad Finstad, Angie Craig, Kelly Morrison, Betty McCollum, Ilhan Omar, Tom Emmer, Michelle Fischbach, Pete Stauber  
U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith

CC:

Gov. Tim Walz, MDE Commissioner Willie Jett  
MN Rep. Lisa Demuth (Speaker), MN Sen. Mark Johnson (Minority Leader)  
MN Sen. Erin Murphy (Majority Leader), Rep. Stephenson (DFL Caucus Leader)



Representative Sydney Jordan, Co-Chair  
Representative Peggy Bennett, Co-Chair  
Education Policy  
February 18, 2026

Chair Jordan, Chair Bennett and Education Policy Committee Members,

On behalf of the MN School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) and the National Association of Social Workers, MN Chapter (NASW-MN), we are writing in support of HF3435.

As the leading professional organizations for social workers in Minnesota, representing a collective 2,700 practitioners, our members serve as the vital link between school, home, and community. We possess unique expertise in how systemic stress and trauma impact a child's ability to learn and thrive.

Children achieve academic and social-emotional success only when they feel safe. HF3435 codifies this necessity by ensuring that immigration enforcement does not disrupt the school day. When federal enforcement occurs near school buildings—as we have seen across Minnesota recently—it creates a chilling effect that leads to declining attendance and widespread anxiety for all students, not just those from immigrant families.

Our current environment of uncertainty leaves a wake of trauma that social workers are the first to address. We understand that addressing barriers like truancy requires time, trust, and a compassionate ecological perspective. HF3435 allows school social workers to focus on their clinical and educational mandates rather than constantly reacting to the crisis of armed enforcement on campus.

HF3435 keeps students centered in the educational process without compromising federal goals. By prioritizing accessibility and dignity, this bill offers a common-sense solution to protect the stability of our school communities.

We wholeheartedly support HF3435 and urge the committee to pass this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Goodenough, LGSW  
Executive Director  
NASW-MN

Julie Campanelli, LICSW  
President  
MSSWA

Christy McCoy, LICSW  
Legislative Chair  
MSSWA



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*Our mission: To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.*

February 18, 2026

Re: HF 3435 - Access to school sites limited

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

Minnesota PTA supports HF 3435, which would put into state law important limits on access to schools by officials engaged in immigration enforcement. Our Minnesota PTA members - your constituents - have been front-row witnesses to the negative effects of recent immigration enforcement on Minnesota students and educators.

The drop in attendance numbers in Minnesota schools during the immigration actions in our communities shows that many families are keeping their children at home in response. Students who do come to school are distracted and anxious about the possibility of immigration enforcement activity coming to their school or playground.

Being absent means students are missing out not only on important learning opportunities, but also free breakfast and lunch, mental health and special education support services, and precious time with their teachers and friends. Anxiety and distractions impede student learning and undermine trust. Anxiety has long-term effects on student mental health, and time will be needed to reestablish trust, even after a surge in immigration enforcement ends.

None of this is normal. None of this is okay. None of this is healthy for students, staff or families. This is interfering with the responsibilities of schools to support student learning and wellness. HF 3435 can change that by ensuring protections are restored to keep immigration enforcement out of schools.

Minnesota PTA has supported and advocated for parents, students, and educators across the state for over 100 years, and our support for this legislation continues this work. We currently have over two hundred local units in Minnesota with 4,000 members representing all forms of schools, including rural, suburban, urban, district, and charter. The Minnesota PTA is a state congress of the National PTA, the oldest and largest child advocacy organization in the nation, with over 20,000 local units in all fifty states.

Both the National PTA and Minnesota PTA believe schools should not be placed in the position of determining the legal status of immigrant children nor be required to enforce immigration laws, and not be a place where students and their families should have to live in fear of being apprehended by federal agents.

The Trump Administration eliminated schools' designation as sensitive locations free of Federal immigration enforcement, and without action by Congress to put these protections into law, state action is the only recourse available to restore these protections. Together, we must ensure that schools are always safe, welcoming places where students, educators, and families can learn and thrive without fear of immigration enforcement or law-enforcement actions that undermine educational environments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rachel Coleman  
President, Minnesota PTA

Joanne Barkmeier  
Advocacy Commissioner, Minnesota PTA



February 17, 2026

## House Education Policy Committee\_HF3435 support

### **Chair Jordan, Chair Bennett, members of the House Education Policy Committee,**

We are testifying today in support of HF3435 as amended. This bill returns us to a policy that was in place for roughly 20 years – prohibiting immigration enforcement at schools except where law enforcement has a warrant or exigent circumstances.

In 2007, the George W. Bush administration issued a memo to ICE restricting immigration enforcement “at or near schools, other institutions of education, and venues where children and their families may be present.”<sup>1</sup> Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden continued or expanded this policy only for President Trump to revoke the policy on the first day of his second term. As prior DHS officials has noted, DHS “can accomplish [its] enforcement mission without denying or limiting individuals’ access to needed medical care, children access to their schools, the displaced access to food and shelter, people of faith access to their places of worship, and more.”

We have seen the disastrous results of that policy change here in Minnesota as attendance has dropped, records of anxiety and disruption have increased, and the federal government has unleashed excessive force on our students. DHS agents, masked and armed, have staged in school parking lots, they have detained people on school grounds, and in two fairly publicized incidents they (1) grabbed five-year old Liam Ramos returning home from school to use him as “bait” to unlawfully detain his father who is lawfully present in this country and (2) in another they deployed pepper spray and chemical irritants on Roosevelt high school staff and students in Minneapolis.

Bills protecting sensitive locations have existed in other states for nearly a decade. When a similar bill was challenged in California, the court upheld the state’s restrictions on its employees. Citing Supreme Court precedent, the Ninth Circuit noted that “a state ‘does not discriminate against the Federal Government and those with whom it deals unless it treats someone else better than it treats them.’ [The California law] does not treat the federal government worse than anyone else; indeed, it does not regulate federal operations at all.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, this bill does not regulate federal activity; it governs the activities of school district and charter school employees – the only restrictions in this bill are placed on the actions of school district and charter school employees.

### **We urge the committee to support HF 3409.**

John Boehler  
Policy Counsel, ACLU-MN

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/policy/10029\\_EnforcementActionsSchool\\_12.26.2007.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/policy/10029_EnforcementActionsSchool_12.26.2007.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> United States v. California, 921 F.3d 865, 881 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2019).

To whom it may concern,

My name is Amanda Schmaltz, and I live in Shoreview. I've been a speech-language pathologist in the Spring Lake Park School District for nearly twenty years, supporting multilingual learners and their families across early childhood and transition programs. I'm here today in strong support of the bill **"Access to School Sites Is Limited."**

In my work, I see every day how fear of immigration enforcement affects children's ability to learn, communicate, and simply show up to school. We are seeing families avoid well-child visits, skip early childhood screenings, and hesitate to access special education evaluations because they worry that any interaction with public institutions could put them at risk. These delays have long-term consequences for children's development.

Educators across the metro are also witnessing deeply concerning incidents: agents circling bus stops, lingering in residential parking lots, appearing near Spanish Immersion schools, and even prompting a school lockdown. Families are keeping children home, avoiding work, refusing medical care, and in some cases leaving the state entirely.

The impact on students is profound. Attendance has dropped dramatically. Some schools have shifted to distance learning because so many children are too afraid to attend in person. We are delivering more than 100 emergency food boxes each week because families are afraid to leave their homes. Teachers are reporting increased depression, anxiety, and trauma — many say this is worse than the early months of COVID.

Schools must be places where families feel safe bringing their children. **"Access to School Sites Is Limited"** is a necessary step to restore trust, protect student well-being, and ensure that all Minnesota families can access education without fear.

Thank you for your leadership and for listening to those of us working directly with affected families.

Sincerely,

Amanda M. Schmaltz

My name is Sara. My children attend a Spanish immersion elementary school in the Twin Cities. I am intentionally withholding the school's name in this written testimony to protect our community from the spotlight.

The impact of ICE activity on our school has been devastating. We serve approximately 680 students, with 30-40% being Spanish speaking families. Beginning in January, hundreds of students were absent. Families were and are terrified to send their children to school. In response, our school created a hybrid option so homebound students could continue learning. While no one calls it a "burden," the reality is that teachers and staff, who are already stretched thin, have become emotional first responders for frightened families. They are now doing so much above and beyond typical school duties, with some out visiting and making deliveries to families until late into the evening.

Many families in our school community have not left their homes for two months or more, except out of desperation for food or medical care. The mental health toll on children is one of the most difficult to quantify, as everyone is trying to put on a good front despite these unimaginable circumstances. One mother told me her daughters, ages 10 and 14, wake only for Zoom classes and then return to sleep. They are sleeping excessively and withdrawn. Their father was detained when he attended his legally required weekly visa check-in. He was transferred out of state the same day, before a habeas corpus petition could be filed, and he remains detained. He believes his only option is self-deportation, despite having legal status. And, as I've shared this horrific story with other trusted folks in our school community, many who are arguably better connected with our immigrant families than I am, shook their heads and said they know of several other people that are in a similar situation - here with some type of legal status, but abducted nonetheless and sent out of state too quickly to receive due process. And, regardless of status, many families who have no criminal record are being torn apart with no due process and without any dignity or humanity. Another mother and three children were on their way home from their immigration appointment. This mother and three children were flown out of the country within 24 hours. And, then of course others in the Hispanic community hear stories of their friends, neighbors, relatives being snatched off the street, and it stokes a type of fear in them that, again, is truly unimaginable.

What I hear over and over is fear - constant, unrelenting fear. Parents describe living in a state of anxiety. Children are confined indoors. One parent of children ages 11, 8, and 4 said the older ones try to understand, but the youngest are restless and confused because she is unable to play outside, but thankfully too young to grasp exactly why.

Other examples from our community:

A woman delivering food to a family was approached by ICE agents with guns drawn. They confiscated the food. She is too afraid to speak publicly but has contacted the ACLU.

Parents volunteering for bus patrol have been harassed. One agent yelled that these women helping kids get home safely from their busses were "conspiring against the government," then ran their license plates and using common intimidation tactics, told the mom/volunteer that they "knew where she lived" sharing the area of her home as a way to threaten/intimidate.

Another parent personally drove someone to the hospital and stayed with him because he was too afraid to call 911.

There is a [9-minute clip starting at 1:35-1:44 of this video](#) where my fellow community members and parents share a harrowing story about ICE terrorizing people near our school communities.

Federal agents repeatedly circle the apartment complexes and mobile home parks where our school families live. They linger in parking lots. One person was taken while getting into his vehicle; another was detained while driving with his son and brother. Agents have entered private property and harassed residents who were exercising their right to observe and record. I was one of those harassed while sitting in my vehicle on private property. I have submitted the video to the ACLU and attorney general.

Agents have been present in our school parking lot and the adjacent park. Our school has gone into a secure lockdown to protect students. Not to mention that many of our teachers are also Hispanic and extremely fearful to be outside their homes, yet they go in to teach each day to support our children.

Bus drivers have been instructed to return children to school if ICE is present at a bus stop during afternoon drop-off because no one feels safe with ICE around, as it is well documented that ICE has a pattern of detaining children and then retaliating against their families by attempting to remove their legal status.

As fear keeps parents from working or shopping, families now need food assistance. Increasingly, they need rent assistance as well.

Another parent shared that our Spanish-immersion school is built on the belief that both Spanish and English are assets, and is forever fractured. When half of many of the classes remain home, it is no longer truly dual language immersion. After-school events have been canceled or scaled back because families are too afraid to attend. Parents have mobilized to provide food, rent support, and bus patrols, but this grassroots effort is not sustainable.

Lastly, parents have shared that this situation resembles the isolation of COVID, but it is far worse. This time, the driving force is fear and families being torn apart.

Thank you for reading and please don't hesitate to reach out to me with questions.

Sara Finney

[srfinney777@gmail.com](mailto:srfinney777@gmail.com)

Hello to the Committee Administrators Wilson Lee and Jody Withers, along with others in the Education Policy Committee or those who may read or hear this letter. I am writing in regards to the proposed bill HF3435 on banning ICE from public schools. I hope this bill considers banning ICE not only from entering school buildings, but also from stepping foot on school properties, but either would be a win. As a teacher at a charter school, I would appreciate that if possible this protection would extend to schools as a whole, but if some schools are made more safe through this bill that is enough.

My name is Kaitlyn Hoff. I am a resident of Northeast Minneapolis, life-long Minnesotan, and educator. I am a licensed teacher through PELSB and hold a Tier 3 licence for K-6 education, as well as a masters degree in elementary education. I am currently working with Kindergarteners and First Graders. I have been working with students for 4 years, and have been working with youth in both academic and non-academic settings for as long as I can remember. I ask for your patience, as this topic of child well-being, development, and belonging has deep roots in my heart.

I did not plan to work in education. Despite a love of both children and school, it never occurred to me. I stumbled into it accidentally, and I have been so thankful for the administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who encouraged me and coached me into the teacher I am today. I find this an important detail to include because within school walls, I believe the dream of every educator is to create a space of belonging for staff and students. Every single one. Unfortunately, there are many things that make it hard for schools to be places of belonging, for both staff and students. Every single day, I wake up and feel the weight of the day. Which of my coworkers will need an extra smile, help making copies, or maybe a quick tap out to use the restroom for the first time that day?

What about the students? Who will be coming to school hungry today, tired today, sad or angry today without knowing how to express it in any other way than a scream or wail? Who will be anxious to come to school, feeling the gap between their present abilities and the grade level work they are expected to complete (trust me, first graders feel this weight)? Who will feel they have no friends, or won't know how to make friends, or won't want to make new friends? Who is coming into these school walls, taking a breath knowing they will have the presence of safe adults and 1-2 reliable meals? Who is coming with anticipation of the joy and laughter their teacher brings? Which student will make me laugh today for saying something so out of the blue, or make me tear up on a Monday morning as they say "I missed you!"?

And this is all before ICE.

When ICE came, our role as educators expanded more. Already, we were not only teachers but mediators, detectives, our own administrative assistants, emotional-regulators, and much more. Now, we are also delivery drivers, food shelf sorters, and in-home computer and hotspot technicians. Before, there was enough to think about within the school walls. Now, those walls are severely permeable. Before ICE, we could do our best to provide for our students academically,

socially, and emotionally within the school walls, and provide resources for their lives outside of school. There was a kind of boundary that allowed school to be a protected third space for them and for us. The protection of the school walls helped us educators put loose boundaries around an already broad job description. Students too, though maybe less aware of it, subconsciously relied on that same protection.

In order to learn, students must first feel safe. If they do not feel safe, the limbic system in the brain prioritizes safety over learning, as safety is a more basic need. The limbic system is responsible for regulating emotions, behavior, memory, and motivation. If a student feels unsafe at school, they will feel anxious, fearful, or agitated as they prepare to protect themselves against perceived threats, making it harder for them to engage with peers and be calm during lessons. If they feel unsafe, their behavior will be more focused on self-soothing than tuning in to their teacher or being kind to others. If they feel unsafe, their memory is focused on retrieving “ways to feel safe” rather than receiving new and complex information. If students feel unsafe, they are more motivated to seek safety than to learn. And we cannot blame them for that! They do not yet have a fully developed pre-frontal cortex, the system responsible for balancing out the reactions of the limbic system. And even as adults, with fully functioning prefrontal cortexes that attempt to rationalize our anxious thoughts, it is hard to focus on much else when we feel unsafe, anxious, or fearful. How much more with students!

Pair this increase in stressful circumstances with decreasing ways to manage that stress. At our school, we have been having indoor recess for more than a month. This is often in classrooms, though occasionally it is in the gym. When it is in classrooms, students cannot run, jump, or be too loud. Maybe that just sounds unfortunate, but knowing what I know about child development, it is disastrous and heartbreaking. There are already so many things that have limited the time that children have for free play and outdoor play, so to remove outdoor recess out of an abundance of caution for our students and staff feels deeply cruel. I think it is a wise choice considering the external threat posed by ICE, and I feel thankful for our administrators who are making those hard choices, but how dare ICE take away one of the few moments where kids get to be kids.

While banning ICE from public schools would not solve the larger issue of enduring stress posed by ICE, it would allow students a place of refuge in a time when they are surrounded by fear and threat. It would also take a step towards reclaiming schools as places of learning, and not places where families and students fear their safety due to exposure to ICE’s actions.

Please strongly consider protecting our schools and students from ICE by banning them from stepping foot on school properties.

Thank you,

Kaitlyn